CITY HILIGHTS

cityhilights.news@gmail.com | The Truth Speaks | MONDAY ▸ JANUARY 12, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 178 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00 | cityhilights.news@gmail.com

Shri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka.

Government of Karnataka
Department of Revenue &
Department of School Education & Literacy
And
Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board, Kalaburagi

Venue : Yedrami Taluk, Jewargi Constituency, Kalaburagi District
Date : January 12, 2026
Time : 11:00 am

Shri D.K.Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka.

Shri Mallikarjun Kharge
Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition, Rajya Sabha.

Hon'ble Minister for Revenue, Shri Krishna Byregowda; Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, IT & BT and Kalaburagi District In-charge Minister, Shri Priyank Kharge; Hon'ble Minister for Planning and Statistics, Shri D. Sudhakar; and Chairman, KKRDB, Dr. Ajay Dharam Singh, during an official review meeting on the Praja Soudha developmental initiatives in the Kalyana Karnataka Region.

Hon'ble Minister for the School Education & Literacy, Shri Madhu Bangarappa; Hon'ble Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, Dr.Sharanaprakash R Patil; and Chairman, KKRDB, Dr. Ajay Dharam Singh, during an official review meeting on the educational initiatives under the Akshara Aavishkara programme in the Kalyana Karnataka Region.

New Praja Soudha Projects in Kalyana Karnataka region

₹163.55 Crore Investment
for construction of
New Praja Soudha Buildings
(Public Administrative Buildings)

Approval of 300 New Karnataka Public Schools in Kalyana Karnataka region

₹600-₹900 Crore Investment for construction of
300 New Karnataka Public Schools
200 Schools funded by KKRDB
100 Schools funded by the Education Department

Foundation stone laying is being undertaken for various developmental projects in Yedrami and Jewargi taluks, involving an expenditure of **₹879.16 Crore** across **96** works,

Extending Our Heartfelt Welcome To Everyone.

QUICK READ

PRCI Holds Change of Guard and Installation Ceremony in Bengaluru

Bengaluru

PRCI conducted its Change of Guard and Installation Ceremony at JP Nagar Cultural Association, with former DRDO Scientist Devananda Gopal as Chief Guest. MB Jayaram, Chairman Emeritus, and Geetha Shankar, National President, were also present. Dr T Vinay Kumar assumed charge as Chairman, Governing Council, with Dr TS Latha as Vice Chairman and Chinmayee Praveen as Secretary. Additional Directors inducted included Dr BK Ravi, Ravindran, CJ Singh, RN Mahapatra, and Arijith Singh. Dr Prashanth Venugopal became National Head of the Young Communicators Club, while Pashupathi Sharma took over as Secretary General, PRCI.

Two Motorists Killed in Separate Accidents in Nelamangala

Bengaluru

Two tragic road accidents in Nelamangala claimed the lives of two motorcyclists on Saturday. In the first incident near Budihal Gate, a KSRTC bus collided with a bike, fatally running over 29-year-old Sadashiva of Kuluvanahalli. In a separate accident near Thonchikuppe village, a 21-year-old man from Veerasagar was killed when an unidentified vehicle struck him. Both victims died on the spot. Nelamangala traffic police have registered two separate cases to investigate the accidents. Authorities are urging motorists to drive cautiously and follow traffic rules to prevent further fatalities.

Bike Thief Suspect Arrested, 12 Stolen Bikes Recovered

Bengaluru

Bagalgunte police have arrested a bike theft suspect, Salman (23) of Mallasandra, Dasarahalli, cracking multiple cases across Bengaluru. Authorities recovered 12 stolen two-wheelers worth ₹4.50 lakh—five from a vacant plot in Mallasandra and seven from Muduvíwadi, Bidar district. Following the arrest, police detected 11 theft cases in both urban and rural areas. Several cases registered at Bagalgunte police station have now been solved. Police officials praised the coordinated effort and urged residents to report suspicious activities promptly to prevent further thefts and safeguard vehicles across the city.

Bulk waste rules only on paper, collection found on ground

In the absence of strict guidelines for disposal of garbage, the residents continue to depend on private collectors

BENGALURU

Despite the government notifying authorised processors for bulk waste, many large waste generators in the city continue to hand over garbage to unauthorised collectors, prompting Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) to step in and seek stricter enforcement. In a letter to the North and East city corporations, BSWML urged officials to ensure that apartments, tech parks, malls, and other bulk waste generators tie up only with empanelled

vendors. The agency flagged that weeks after empanelment was officially announced, the situation on the ground remains unchanged, with mixed waste still being illegally collected and dumped into GBA compactors, ultimately ending up in landfills. At present, Mukka Protein Ltd is the sole empanelled vendor mapped to handle bulk waste in the North and East zones. The company operates a processing facility with the capacity to scientifically process up to 1,000 tonnes of waste per day, but compliance has been poor.

M Mohan Kumar, Managing Director of Mukka Proteins, told that resistance from apartment associations has been a major hurdle. We personally approached over 800 apartments and emailed more than 2,000 bulk generators, but only a handful came on board.

Many say the same unauthorised operators have been collecting their waste for years and they are afraid to change, he said. According to him, most of the current tie-ups are with govt offices and defence establishments. There is very little response from tech parks and apartments, he added.

Estimates shared by the processor show that North and East Bengaluru together generate 700-800 tonnes of bulk waste every day, with 60-70 percent being wet waste. While dry waste is largely picked up by informal recyclers, wet waste, often only partially segregated, gets mixed during transportation and is illegally dumped in landfills. BSWML and the empanelled vendor allege that unauthorised agencies, including some contractors already engaged in door-to-door collection, are illegally lifting bulk waste without mandatory permissions or consent for establishment. Bulk waste is being routed into GBA compactors and dumped, defeating the entire purpose of decentralised processing, a BSWML official said.

Governor chairs 53rd Annual General Meeting of ISEC

BENGALURU

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot presided over the 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and lauded the institute's significant contributions over the past five decades in the fields of social justice, economic development, inclusive policymaking and evidence-based research.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor said that the studies and analyses carried out by ISEC have been highly valuable to the academic community and have played an important role in guiding policy decisions at both the state and national levels. He noted that in an era marked by rapid social and economic transformation, the role of institutions like ISEC has become even more crucial. The institute's work on inclusive growth, regional disparities, empowerment of disadvantaged sections and sustainable development, he said, is both relevant and impactful.

The Governor also highlighted ISEC's exemplary contribution to the Government of Karnataka, particularly in policy formulation aimed at the upliftment of weaker sections, promotion of social concern, and evaluation of government policies and programmes. He appreciated the sustained and meaningful efforts of the Governing Body and urged all members to participate constructively in the deliberations to ensure that the decisions taken contribute to the institution's growth.

The Governor expressed confidence that the ideas, suggestions and resolutions emerging from the meeting would strengthen ISEC's role beyond that of a think tank, positioning it as an agent of dynamic and positive change in society. He added that active participation by members would help make the institution's decisions more relevant and firmly rooted in public interest.

Metro, Pink Line trainset hits tracks for first trials

BENGALURU

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has begun testing the prototype trainset for the Pink Line, with preliminary trials conducted on the elevated stretch between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere along Bannerghatta Road. Namma Metro had received the prototype from BEML back in December. Under Phase 2, BMRCL is building the 21km Pink Line corridor from Kalena Agrahara to Nagawara, including a 13km underground section between Dairy Circle and Nagawara. The elevated stretch between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere is targeted for opening by mid-2026, while the full corridor is slated for completion by December 2026.

A senior BMRCL official said the testing and certification process would take about six months, followed by statutory approvals from multiple agencies. On Friday, the prototype train was operated at a very slow speed on the mainline between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere. In the coming days, rolling stock-related tests will be carried out in a phased manner. All clearances must be secured before starting commercial operations, the official said.

The tests will include traction and braking trials, oscillation tests at various speeds, and integration checks with signalling, power supply and telecommunication systems.

Namma Metro plans to induct the seventh train into service on the Yellow Line by Makara Sankranthi, reducing the headway on the 19-km corridor from 13 minutes to 11 minutes. Officials said the eighth train, already dispatched by the manufacturer after completing tests, is expected to be inducted in February. Yellow Line operations began in August with three trains and have been ramped up gradually as additional train sets are received.

BMRCL sources said BEML is expected to deliver the second trainset for Pink Line by the end of January, with six trainsets to be supplied by March. Under the contract, BEML will supply 318 standard-gauge Metro cars for the Pink and Blue lines (Silk Board–Kempegowda International Airport). In December 2025, BEML rolled out a driverless Metro trainset for the Pink Line. Namma Metro officials said civil works on the elevated section are at an advanced stage, while signalling works are in progress.

Nobel Laureate Urges Teamwork against Parkinson's

BENGALURU

Amid a global rise in Parkinson's disease cases, Nobel laureate Randy Schekman emphasised that addressing complex neurodegenerative disorders requires collective, team-based efforts rather than isolated individual work in academia.

Speaking at the Infosys Prize 2025 ceremony in Bengaluru, the renowned cell biologist called for greater support for collaborative research through team-based grants, particularly in the fields of Parkinson's disease and other neurodegenerative diseases. He cautioned against what he described as over-emphasis on individual achievement in academic reward structures.

Our award winners today have all benefited from academic science, but there is a challenge, Schekman said. The reward structure favours individuals. Real progress on complicated problems like Parkinson's takes team effort, and collaborative work is not necessarily well supported by the current grant system. While Schekman has made significant contributions to understanding the biological mechanisms underlying Parkinson's disease, his remarks also carried a deeply personal note. His late wife was diagnosed with Parkinson's at the age of 48, a journey he recalled during his address.

Basaveshwaraswamy Rathotsava Scheduled for Sankranti on January 15

BENGALURU

On the occasion of Sankranti festival, the Basaveshwaraswamy Rathotsava and Ground parish will be held on January 15, under the leadership of the Sri Basavanna Devara Seva Samiti, said BJP State Farmers' Morcha Vice President M Rudresh.

Speaking at a press conference called at the Sri Basaveshwara Swamy Temple premises in Sompura, Nice Road, Yeshwantpur Assembly Constituency, he said that the Basaveshwaraswamy Rathotsava and Groundnut parish will be held on January 15, under the leadership of the Sri Basavanna Devara Seva Samiti, in the premises of the Sri Basaveshwaraswamy Temple, which has a historical background of the Chola period and was renovated in 2006.

On the day of Sankranti, more than a thousand priest couples who perform puja in temples will be honoured and a chariot will be dedicated by the Vijayendra Yediyurappa family. The chief guests will be former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje, MP Raghavendra, BJP State President BY Vijayendra, film actor Dunia Vijay, NICE organization head Ashok Kheni, MLC TN Javarayi Gowda, Shivalinge Gowda of Thibbadevi Tent House will participate.

The programme will be graced by Sri Mummadi Nirvana Mahaswami of Sri Degula Math, Kanakapura, Nishchalanandanath Mahaswamiji of Kengeri Okkaligar Mahasansthan Math, Yadava Mahasansthan Math, Yadavananda Mahaswami, Trinetra Mahanta Shivayogi Swami, Niranjananandpuri Swamiji of Kaginele Peetha, Dr. Shivarudra Mahaswamy of Mummadi, Sachchidananda Mahaswamy of Bandhayade Math, Renuka Shivacharya Mahaswamy of Patta and other dignitaries will participate. This time, more than 2 lakh devotees are expected to come. Cheese and dasoha have been arranged for all those who come, he informed.

Guarantee schemes put Karnataka at top in per capita income: KJ George

BENGALURU

Energy Minister KJ George attributed Karnataka's top ranking in per capita income to the government's guarantee schemes.

Speaking at the Founder's Day celebration at Dr BR Ambedkar Medical and Hospital, he said, our government has empowered women, who are known for sacrifice and love, through these schemes. This has led to our state's rise to the top in per capita income.

George explained that the schemes would provide around Rs 5,500 into each family, boosting economic activity and creating thousands of jobs. The schemes have increased people's purchasing power, strengthening families and the state's economy, he added.

Explaining the idea behind the inception of the guarantee schemes, the minister recalled, Congress National

leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra spanning 3200 kms. When yatra entered Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had joined him. During the yatra, Rahul Gandhi interacted with people of all strata to know their problems and feedback. The Yatra highlighted the need to support people struggling post-COVID. Our government announced these schemes in the first cabinet meeting, fulfilling Rahul Gandhi's call to provide economic support, he said.

George also appreciated Ambedkar Medical College in his constituency for providing excellent healthcare services during COVID-19 by offering 120 beds for patients.

The minister also outlined plans to develop Sarvagna Nagar with a focus on education and healthcare, including an upcoming 120-bed hospital shortly.

'Education is essential for overall growth'

BENGALURU

If education shapes our lives, culture and traditions will complete our lives, said Dr. Prakash Nath Swamiji, Managing Director of BGS and SJB Group of Institutions.

He spoke at the college's Silver Jubilee and Sankranti Cultural Festival-2026 programme organized at SJBIT auditorium. Knowledge acquisition and passion for art should get equal recognition. In this regard, BGS Institute has been giving appropriate representation to art as well.

Interest and dedication are very important to achieve success in any field including art education. He told the students that if the goal and willpower go hand in hand, then the impossible will disappear. Swamiji Vinay Guruji of Gauri Gadde spoke and said that the world is like a school. He said that the importance of knowledge and information given to us by life and environment is above all. Festival celebrations and festive dishes also have medical reasons. He said that if these ideas are understood and the festival is celebrated, the rituals will also gain importance.

HEALTH CONCERN

Experts link planning failures to health concerns

BENGALURU

The city's traffic-clogged roads, deteriorating air quality and shrinking public spaces are no longer just civic inconveniences, they are increasingly shaping public health outcomes, experts warned at a Bengaluru Debates session held by Janaagraha, an NGO. Experts pointed out that Bengaluru saw a sharp rise in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity, driven by sedentary lifestyles, long commute hours and environmental stress. Mental health challenges linked to congestion, noise pollution and lack of recreational spaces were also flagged as growing concerns. Public health specialists, urban planners and policymakers at the discussion said the city's rapid and unplanned growth created conditions that directly contribute to lifestyle diseases, mental health stress and long-term health risks, making governance failures a public health concern rather than a purely administrative one.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said while Bengaluru's expansion is inevitable, the health damage caused by poor planning is not. Public health does not begin in hospitals. It begins with how cities are designed, how people move, breathe and live, he said, stressing the need to integrate health considerations into urban planning.

BJP MLA CN Ashwath Narayan said fragmented governance structures worsen the problem. Health outcomes cannot be fixed by the health department alone. Transport, water supply, waste management and housing policies affect how healthy a city is, he said.

Several speakers said Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) could be a crucial institutional reform framework if it enables coordinated planning across sectors. Urban experts noted that the civic authority presents an opportunity to embed public health goals into decisions on transport, road design, zoning and environmental protection.

CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

MONDAY ▸ JANUARY 12, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 178 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
Certified English Daily

Japan PM may call early election P8

XVI Russia–India Business Dialogue Highlights Expanding Economic Cooperation P9

P12 'Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma make life easier': Shubman Gill

www.ibcworldnews.com | BENGALURU ▸ HUBBALLI ▸ MANGALURU ▸ MYSURU ▸ KALABURAGI | cityhilights.news@gmail.com

India set to become world's third-largest economy, says PM Modi

Amid great global uncertainty, we are seeing certainty in India, said PM Narendra Modi

RAJKOT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is rapidly advancing toward becoming the world's third-largest economy, with global expectations increasingly focused on the country. Addressing the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference in Rajkot, he stated, "The numbers clearly show this. Amid great global uncertainty, we are seeing certainty in India. There is political stability in the country."

Highlighting key economic indicators, Mr. Modi said inflation is under control, and India has emerged as the world's largest producer of milk and vaccines. He noted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recognises India as a major engine of global growth. The Prime Minister reiterated the government's mantra of "reform, perform and transform," pointing to India's position as the largest consumer of data and the global scale of the UPI (Unified Payments Interface) digital payments platform.

He cited India's progress in manufacturing, saying, "There was a time when India imported mobile phones. Today, we are the world's second-largest manufacturer of mobile handsets." He also highlighted urban infrastructure, noting India ranks among the top three globally in metro rail networks.

India is heading to become the world's third largest economy, and Gujarat has played a key role in this journey. The state has emerged as a major growth engine for both domestic and global investors.

—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Turning to Gujarat, Mr. Modi praised the State's strengths and investment potential. He said the country's largest semiconductor fabrication facility is being established in Dholera. He stressed the need for an industry-ready workforce, noting Gujarat has the required skills to meet demand.

Calling on investors to seize opportunities in the State, he said, "If you come late and miss out, don't blame me." He described Gujarat as a unique blend of nature, adventure, culture, and rich heritage, reaffirming its status as a preferred investment destination.

India's continued reforms, robust infrastructure, skilled workforce, and stable political environment, he said, make it a reliable hub for global investors and a significant driver of worldwide economic growth.

No fight for CM's chair in Karnataka Cong: Siddaramaiah

MANGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday dismissed speculation of a power struggle within the ruling Congress party, asserting that there was no fight for the CM's chair in the state.

He also said he would meet Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to explain the Hate Speech Bill, even as the BJP plans to urge the latter not to give his assent to the bill.

He was responding to a question on the BJP's social media post claiming that the fight for the Chief Minister's chair in the Congress party, will once again begin after Sankranti festival.

Speculations over a possible change in chief minister in the state gained traction after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20.

It was fueled by the "power-sharing" pact between Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar in 2023.

Responding to a question on BJP planning to meet the Governor over the Hate Speech bill, the CM said, "The bill was passed by the legislature. The Governor has neither rejected it or sent it back, nor has given his assent to it. Let's see, whenever he calls, I will go and explain to him (Governor)." The Lok Bhavan (the Governor House) on Friday in a statement had said that the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill was "under consideration".

Reacting to BJP's proposed 'padayatre' (foot march) from Ballari to Bengaluru in connection with recent clashes in Ballari that led to the death of a person, the CM said, "let them do it, who said they should not."

"There is no fight, you (media) create it. Where is the fight? Unnecessarily you ask such questions,"

—Siddaramaiah, K'taka CM

Remarks on Ballari incident

Siddaramaiah alleged, "... the removal of the banner was an instigation. If the banner was not removed, where would have been the instigation? The banner was regarding the unveiling of Maharshi Valmiki statue, what was the need to remove it?" Claiming that the BJP was waiting for an opportunity to politicise the issue, he said, "Particularly Janardhan Reddy, his brothers, and Sriramuluru (Reddy's close confidant and former Minister) have lost hold in Ballari, Reddy's wife lost in Ballari, so they are doing it out of jealousy."

Cong worried about funding because treasury is empty: R. Ashoka

MYSURU

Opposition Leader R. Ashoka accused the Congress government of opposing the VB G RAM G Act due to fear of providing its share of funds, highlighting that the state treasury is running empty.

Addressing a press conference, he said the central government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, introduced the VB G RAM G Act to correct flaws in the rural employment guarantee scheme over the past 18 years, ensure transparency, and prevent corruption. Ashoka alleged that under the previous Congress rule, irregularities such as wage theft, ghost beneficiaries, and use of machinery like JCBs for manual work were rampant. The new scheme ends such malpractices through biometric attendance, fixed timelines for wage payments, and cancellation of fake job cards.

He noted that during the UPA government, Rs 2.5 lakh crore was allocated, while under the Modi government, Rs 8 lakh crore has been provided. The state's share under the scheme is Rs 10,000 crore, while total funds, including central contributions, reach Rs 27,000 crore.

Ashok criticized the Congress for opposing increases in employment days from 100 to 125, claiming this would aid farmers and create permanent assets for rural development. He also condemned the government for calling a special session over funding concerns while ignoring other urgent issues, such as housing for migrants and compensation for disasters.

Ashok urged that the scheme should be implemented fully to benefit real beneficiaries, emphasizing that opposition to a people-focused program due to funding fears undermines both development and democracy.

LEGENDARY RUN FEAT

Virat Kohli became the fastest batter to reach **28,000** international runs during the first ODI against New Zealand in Vadodara, surpassing Tendulkar and Sangakkara.

I accept Opposition's debate challenge on MGNREGA: DKS

BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday said he has accepted the Opposition parties' challenge to debate the implementation of MGNREGA and is ready to face the discussion on any platform at any time.

Speaking to reporters near Palace Grounds, Shivakumar said the Opposition had indicated its willingness for a debate and he was prepared to take it up immediately. "They said they are ready to debate MGNREGA. I accept the offer. It can be a public platform, the Assembly, or even the media. I am ready anytime," he said.

"The Opposition parties have said they are ready for my challenge to debate MGNREGA. I accept the offer and I am ready for the debate on any platform any time."

—DK Shivakumar, , K'taka DCM

Responding to questions about former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy's participation, Shivakumar said he would welcome him to the debate. "It will be good if Kumaraswamy comes first. Whether it is the BJP state president, the Leader of the Opposition, or Kumaraswamy, I am ready," he said.

Reacting to Kumaraswamy's remarks calling Chief Minister Siddaramaiah a 'leased CM', Shivakumar said such comments need not be taken seriously. "He is a dialogue king before the media. We have been hearing such dialogues for years. The Chief Minister will respond. Fix a time for the debate, even this evening—I don't need preparation, all the facts are at my fingertips," he said.

Iran warns US troops and Israel will be targets if America strikes

DUBAI

Iran has warned that US troops and Israel would be considered legitimate targets if Washington carries out military action amid nationwide protests that have entered their third week. Demonstrations challenging Iran's theocratic rule continued in Tehran and Mashhad, despite a sweeping internet and communications blackout. Activist groups report at least 116 deaths linked to the unrest, with around 2,600 people detained so far. Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, issued the warning during a heated parliamentary session, vowing harsh punishment for protesters and praising security forces, including the Revolutionary Guard and Basij militia, for their response.

More on page 8

B'luru army officer wins UN Secretary General's award 2025

BENGALURU

Major Swathi Shantha Kumar, a 31-year-old officer from Bengaluru serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), has been honoured with the UN Secretary-General's Award 2025 for her groundbreaking project, "Equal Partners, Lasting Peace." The initiative was recognised in the UN's Gender Category for fostering safety, mobility, and empowerment for 5,000 local women, enabling them to actively participate in peace dialogues and community decision-making.

Under Major Swathi's leadership, India's first all-female engagement team conducted extensive patrols—both land-based and riverine, as well as dynamic air patrols—covering some of South Sudan's most remote and conflict-prone regions. The project not only ensured physical security but also strengthened trust between communities and peacekeeping forces, setting a benchmark for gender-inclusive operations in international missions.

QUICK READ

SIR: Another BLO dies by suicide due to workload

KOLKATA: Hamimul Islam, 47, headmaster and Booth Level Officer (BLO) of East Alaipur polling booth in Murshidabad, died by suicide on Saturday, allegedly due to stress and workload from the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. His body was found hanging in his school classroom. Islam's family said the combined pressure of his headmaster duties and SIR responsibilities became unbearable. His death follows that of another BLO, Samprita Chowdhury Sanyal, who passed away on January 7 due to illness linked to SIR work. So far, at least eight BLOs in the state have died, prompting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to urge the Election Commission to take corrective action to reduce stress and workload.

NDA turned democracy into 'dhan tantra': Tejashwi

PATNA: RJD leader and Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday accused the ruling NDA of converting democracy into "dhan tantra" and "machine tantra" in Bihar, alleging that the 2025 Assembly election was won through deceit and misuse of money and government machinery. Returning from a Europe tour, Yadav said it was the people of Bihar, not his party, who lost the election. Without elaborating, he hinted at issues like administrative exercises and cash transfer schemes influencing the polls. He announced he would refrain from criticising the NDA government for 100 days and observe whether it fulfils promises such as jobs for youth, financial aid to women and industrial development.

X ACKNOWLEDGES ERROR

X accepts mistake, assures to comply with Indian laws

NEW DELHI

Microblogging site X has "accepted its mistake" and assured it will comply with Indian laws after the IT Ministry warned the Elon Musk-led social media platform on the Grok AI obscene content issue, government sources said on Sunday.

Around 3,500 pieces of content have been blocked, and over 600 accounts deleted, according to sources.

X has accepted its mistake and said it will comply with Indian laws, sources said, adding that in future, the platform will not allow obscene imagery.

Earlier, the government had asked X for details, including specific action taken on obscene content linked to Grok AI, and measures to prevent a repeat in future, after it found the response submitted by the platform to be inadequate.

In its response after the first notice was issued to it, X had outlined the strict content takedown policies it abides by when it comes to misleading posts and those related to non-consensual sexualised images.

While the reply was long and detailed, it had "missed" key information, including takedown details and specific action that was taken on the Grok AI obscene content issue, and measures to prevent it in future.

On January 2, the IT Ministry issued a stern warning to X over indecent and sexually explicit content being generated through the misuse of AI-based services like Grok and other tools.

X's 'Safety' handle, last Sunday, said it takes action against illegal content on its platform, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), by removing it, permanently suspending accounts, and working with local governments and law enforcement as necessary.

"Anyone using or prompting Grok to make illegal content will suffer the same consequences as if they upload illegal content," X had said, echoing the stance taken by Musk on illegal content.

QUICK READ

'First Language Should Reflect State Identity'

Bengaluru

The mother tongue of a state should be the first language taught in all primary schools, eminent thinker Dr Baragur Ramachandrappa said on Sunday. Speaking at the Jnanajyoti Auditorium, he stressed that making the state language compulsory as the first language was in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution. Dr Ramachandrappa said Article 350(A) does not permit any state to impose its language as the first language in schools outside its territory. Referring to the Kerala government's move to make Malayalam the first language in Kannada schools, he said the decision was unconstitutional and undermined linguistic federalism.

Auto Driver Attacked for Questioning Bike Taxi

Bengaluru

An autorickshaw driver was allegedly assaulted near the Muneshwara temple at Dairy Circle after questioning a bike taxi rider, police said. The incident occurred when Basavaiah, an autorickshaw driver, was speaking to a man operating a bike taxi that bore a lawyer's sticker. During the conversation, Basavaiah reportedly questioned the legality of running a bike taxi. At this point, an elderly man intervened, behaved rudely and asked Basavaiah who gave him the right to question the rider. The man allegedly picked up a stone and attacked Basavaiah, also behaving indecently during the altercation. Following the incident, Basavaiah lodged a complaint at the Adugodi police station.

Home Guard Attacked by Woman over Attire

Bengaluru

A home guard KR Lakshmi Narasamma, was allegedly assaulted by a woman while she was on duty at KR Puram railway station circle. When she tried to admonish the girl who was walking on the street wearing shorts, she grabbed Lakshmi Narasamma's hair and beat her up at will. The incident took place on Saturday evening. KR Mohini was walking around near Puram railway station circle wearing short clothes. Seeing her, some of the youths started teasing her. Lakshmi Narasamma, a home guard on duty, warned Mohini about the clothes she was wearing. "Who are you to advise me?", asked Mohini and attacked Lakshmi Narasamma, was allegedly beaten up by the hair of her home guard Lakshmi Narasamma for asking her about her clothes.

I Have Faith in My Party, Says Deputy CM DK Shivakumar

"I believe in my party and its decisions, come what may," said DK Shivakumar

BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar expressed confidence in his party's decisions regarding his political future while addressing entrepreneurs at the 'Udyami Vokkaliga Expo 2026'.

Shivakumar, who doesn't come from a political family, said, "I have grown to this level through sheer effort. I am confident the party will take a decision on me going forward."

Recalling his political journey, he said, "I once told B S Yediyurappa that success requires the dharma of Dharmaraya, generosity of Karna, focus of Arjuna, strategy of Vidura, strength of Bheema, and tactics of Krishna. I have taken many blows in politics." Shivakumar also addressed criticism from within his own community, adding, "People close to us cheat; be careful. The ones I supported now accuse me of backstabbing. I don't need certificates—my conscience knows how honest I was when Kumaraswamy was CM."

On faith and opportunities, he said, "God doesn't give boons or curses, only opportunities. Trust is the biggest thing in life. Maintain it in all transactions. I am here to express my solidarity with hard-working entrepreneurs."

He concluded by advising the community, "The name Vokkaliga is self-respect. Young entrepreneurs must be guarded. Don't lend money carelessly; blood and money must always circulate, as Balagangadharanatha Swamiji said."

BWSSB begins ₹ 40-crore project replacing 120 km of old pipelines; traffic on Double Road and nearby streets to face delays

Pipeline Replacement Work to Disrupt Shanthinagar Traffic

BENGALURU

Traffic in Shanthinagar, including Double Road, Nanjappa Road, and surrounding streets, is expected to be disrupted for the next 30–40 days as the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) undertakes a Rs 40-crore project to replace aging pipelines in the assembly.

According to Surendra Reddy, senior site engineer for the executing agency, 120 km of pipeline network will be upgraded. Work near Ulsoor has mostly finished, and feeder line replacement on Nanjappa Road began last week. Subsequent phases will cover Lakshmi Road and Basappa Road. BWSSB officials confirmed the project will coincide with the Central City Corporation's whitetopping initiative on Double Road.

The project includes installing 300 mm and 200 mm feeder pipes, and 100 mm sub-line pipes for household connections. Top-grade ductile iron (DI) pipes with cement coating, rubber coating, and steel reinforcement will prevent future contamination for at least 25 years.

Residents, however, report that ongoing work has affected entry and exit across more than 10 streets. "Sewage-contaminated water persisted in our taps last year, despite repeated complaints. Now that work has started, we hope BWSSB resolves the issue permanently," said Renuka Prasad of the Shanthinagar Resident Welfare Association.

The agency expects testing and contamination checks to continue for up to 45 days, after which drinking water safety and traffic flow should improve significantly in the assembly.

Woman escapes as ex-boyfriend tries to shoot her

BENGALURU

A 25-year-old man was arrested after allegedly trying to shoot a young woman with an illegal pistol near a college campus in Mallapura, near Nelamangala on the outskirts of Bengaluru. The woman escaped unhurt as the weapon misfired twice, enabling her to alert the police. The incident triggering panic in the area and renewing concerns over the easy availability of illegal firearms along the city outskirts. The accused, Shubham Kumar, a Bihar native working as a bike taxi rider and residing in Nelamangala, was in a relationship with the victim, Aparna, a nursing student from Sikkim living in Ejipura, police said. The two had been dating for over a year after meeting on Instagram. Investigators said Shubham had begun suspecting Aparna of being in touch with another man, leading to frequent arguments and emotional distress. Police said the accused illegally procured a pistol loaded with four rounds and asked Aparna to meet him in Nelamangala on the pretext of a discussion. When she arrived in a taxi, he allegedly attempted to fire at her, but the pistol misfired twice.

Madras Eye Cases Rise, Doctors Urge School Caution

BENGALURU

The number of cases of conjunctivitis, also known as Madras Eye, is continuously increasing in city. An unusual cold wave coupled with high humidity in the city has led to an increase in cases of Madras Eye infection. Doctors say that the eye infection is spreading rapidly among school children due to the changing weather.

In the past few weeks, general hospitals and eye hospitals across the city have seen a surge in the number of patients suffering from eye problems including redness, itching and watering of the eyes. Although conjunctivitis affects people of all ages, children are more likely to spread Madras Eye infection due to close contact in classrooms and sharing of toys and stationery.

Cold weather, pollution, rapid spread: Health experts say that fluctuations in temperature and rising pollution levels are also responsible for the increase in cases of Madras Eye infection. There has been a sharp increase in eye-related cases in the past few weeks, said Dr Asima Banu, head of microbiology at Bangalore Medical College.

In the last four weeks, the pollution level in Bengaluru has increased sharply. This has led to complaints of dry, watery and irritated eyes. There has also been a sharp increase in allergic conjunctivitis. Eye allergy cases have increased by about 60 percent. Conjunctivitis cases have increased by at least 20 percent compared to last year, says Dr Asima Banu.

Various precautions should be taken, including wearing masks outdoors and avoiding morning walks when pollution levels are high. Dust, smoke, and allergens are exacerbating eye irritation. They are making people more susceptible to infections, the doctor explains.

The current Madras Eye epidemic is mostly viral in nature. Conjunctivitis infection has been reported to be spreading more in schools. Madras Eye usually occurs in summer. However, what we are seeing now is a viral infection affecting the eyes. Viruses survive in cold conditions, and cases increase during this season, explained Dr Asima.

Medical awareness and early care are key. Early recognition of symptoms and keeping infected children at home are key. Doctors say following medical advice can help slow the spread and protect the community.

Girl Raped, Killed as Accused Took Revenge on Mother

BENGALURU

It has been revealed that the accused who killed his 6-year-old daughter in Whitefield out of anger at her mother had raped her before the murder.

The post-mortem examination revealed that the accused had committed rape. The police have arrested the accused Yusuf, a native of West Bengal, in connection with the case. After the murder, the accused had fled to West Bengal. The police have arrested him and brought him to Bengaluru.

He raped the girl, then murdered her and dumped her body in a cesspool. Police initially suspected that he had killed his daughter over a fight with his mother. However, a post-mortem examination revealed that she had been raped.

During interrogation, the accused confessed that he had taken her away by promising her chocolates for the purpose of rape. The accused has been subjected to intensive interrogation by the Whitefield police station.

Couple Level Abuse, Nude Photo Blackmail Allegations

BENGALURU

A marital dispute in Bengaluru has taken a dramatic turn, with both husband and wife levelling serious allegations against each other at the Central Women's Police Station. The case involves Meghashree, who recently filed a complaint accusing her husband, Manjunath, of abusive and disturbing behaviour, and Manjunath's subsequent decision to lodge a counter-complaint alleging blackmail and extortion.

In her complaint, Meghashree alleged that within days of their marriage, her husband began behaving in a "psychotic" and humiliating manner. She claimed that he walked naked in front of her parents at home, forced her to watch explicit videos, and coerced her into sexual acts against her will. She further alleged that he pressured her to have physical relations with others and shared her private photographs without consent, leaving her traumatised and fearful.

Following the complaint, Manjunath rejected all allegations, calling them false and motivated by financial demands. He alleged that Meghashree was attempting to blackmail him for ₹30 lakh and 50 grams of gold. According to him, she had also accused him of taking valuables such as an iPhone, iPad and tablet, which he denied. Manjunath claimed Meghashree had been married twice earlier and had filed similar complaints against her previous husbands before divorcing them. He stated that he was aware of her past marriages before tying the knot and alleged that she was repeating the same pattern.

Manjunath said they met while working in the same company and married after mutual consent. He accused Meghashree of misusing legal provisions and stated that he would place all facts before the police to "expose the truth".

Responding to her husband's counter-allegations, Meghashree denied seeking any money or valuables from Manjunath. She acknowledged her previous marriages but said they had ended legally before her current marriage, and that Manjunath was fully aware of her past. She reiterated that his abusive behaviour began soon after marriage and questioned how she could continue living under such circumstances.

Police said they have received complaints from both sides and are examining the matter. Further action will be taken after recording statements and verifying evidence, officials added.

No scam in Amrit Mahotsav scheme: Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corp MD

BENGALURU

There is no scam in the Amrit Mahotsav Scheme. Not a single penny of the Rs 27.5 crores of money given to 550 beneficiaries has been used, said Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Managing Director Parashuram. GBA has not sent the list of beneficiaries to deposit money in the list of beneficiaries. If GBA had sent the list, we would have deposited money in the account of the beneficiaries.

They have written a letter saying that they will send the list of beneficiaries according to the zone under GBA jurisdiction, then deposit money. They said that the list has not been sent yet.

The beneficiaries and the housing department have a joint account and the money has been credited, a message has been sent. But the money has not gone to the beneficiaries' accounts, it is with Corporation. It is true that the notice was sent. Later, we informed the beneficiaries that the account has not been received. They said that as soon as the list comes from GBA, we will deposit money in the accounts, Parashuram clarified.

Varada–Bedi Project: Bommai Urges Awareness, Seeks Meet

BENGALURU

To create awareness about the implementation of the Varada and Bedi river projects, an awareness conference will be held in Haveri district under the leadership of the Muttahdhees and public representatives. Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai said that the state government should call a meeting to clear up the confusion.

Commenting on the campaign being conducted in Uttara Kannada district to save the Western Ghats and oppose Varada-Bedti, he said,

The Varada-Bedti River linking project is not of today. It has been there since 1994. No new plans are being made. There is a difference between the plan then and the plan today. Now there will be no environmental damage or forest destruction. We are lifting less water from the Bedti River, there will be no loss of water. The state government should convince the people of the struggle led by Swamiji in that area.

Ready for discussion: Let water experts and environmental scientists be called to discuss this issue openly, and an amicable decision should be taken. We are facing a drought. If we store water during the rainy season, it will be beneficial for our side. This should not be seen emotionally. We need to plan so that no one is inconvenienced. The state government has agreed to do a DPR. After the DPR is done, the state government should call a meeting. No river is stagnant water. The Krishna River originates in Maharashtra and flows in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Not just Maharashtra. The Varada Bedi project needs to be done, we are ready for any kind of discussion. The confusion should be resolved through talks. For that, we will call a meeting in Haveri, including the Mathadhis and political leaders.

SOLVE CNG PROBLEM

CNG Shortage Triggers Kilometer-Long Queues

BENGALURU

The number of vehicles in the Silicon City of Bengaluru is increasing day by day. The number of people using the crude oil required for these vehicles is also increasing. In recent times, the use of CNG gas in vehicles is increasing. But in Bengaluru, motorists are facing a situation where they have to wait for kilometers for CNG gas.

There are two lakh autos in city, and the autos that are coming in recently are using CNG gas. Thousands of taxis and bikes are also using CNG instead of LPG. But there are 77 fuel stations in the capital, most of which are outside the city. Therefore, there is a situation of waiting for hours for gas, and driving six or seven kilometers for gas, and auto organizations have appealed to increase the number of fuel stations.

CNG means compressed natural gas. Mainly, this CNG is used in most of the autos, cars and bikes that are coming in recent days. Compared to petrol and diesel, the price of CNG is also low. It gives more mileage, so more people are using it. But the number of CNG bunkers inside Bengaluru city is less. There are a total of two lakh autos and thousands of taxis in the city. But the number of CNG bunkers is only 77. Therefore, motorists are facing a situation where they have to wait for gas for kilometers.

In city, most of the CNG stations are located outside the city. The stations within the city are located at intervals of about seven to eight kilometers, and a situation has arisen where people wait for hours in front of the stations after paying rent. This is causing traffic jams on the roads in front of the stations. Since it is winter, drivers are increasingly turning to the more expensive CNG stations. Adarsh Auto Union President Manjunath has appealed to increase the number of stations.

QUICK READ

Woman dies by suicide after severe menstrual pain

Tumakuru

A 19-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide after being unable to endure severe abdominal pain during menstruation in Tumakuru district of Karnataka. The incident occurred in Byata village of Tumakuru taluk. The deceased has been identified as Keerthana, a native of Salahalli in Kalagi taluk of Kalaburagi district. She had come to Tumakuru in search of employment and was staying at her uncle's house. As she was unable to secure a job, she continued living there. According to police, Keerthana ended her life by hanging herself with a saree when no one was present at the house. It is suspected that intense menstrual pain drove her to take the extreme step. A case has been registered at the Kyathsandra police station, and further investigation is underway.

Son brutally kills father over family dispute

Channarayapatna

A shocking incident of patricide was reported from Hirisave in Channarayapatna taluk of Hassan district, where a 28-year-old man allegedly murdered his own father following a prolonged family dispute. The deceased has been identified as Satish (60), while the accused is his son Ranjith (28). Police said the family had been facing continuous domestic conflicts for a long time. Due to frequent quarrels, Ranjith and his mother had reportedly been living separately in KR Nagar. Tensions between father and son continued, and the dispute escalated on Saturday night. During a heated argument, Ranjith allegedly assaulted his father with an iron rod, striking him on the head and killing him on the spot. Police rushed to the scene, conducted an inspection, and registered a case at the Hirisave police station. The accused has been arrested, and further investigation is underway.

Mangalore University, Bearys Institute of Technology sign MoU

Mangalore University and Bearys Institute of Technology signed an MoU to boost academic, research, and cultural collaboration ties

MANAGLURU

Mangalore University and Bearys Institute of Technology (BIT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in academics, research, and cultural activities. The agreement aims to promote joint initiatives that benefit students, faculty members, and the broader academic community.

Mangalore University, established under the Karnataka State Universities Act, and Bearys Institute of Technology, functioning under the Bearys Academy of Learning at the Bearys Knowledge Campus in Inoli, Mangaluru, will jointly implement a wide range of academic and professional programs under this partnership. The MoU aligns with global academic initiatives and supports international collaboration between institutions in Karnataka and Wales, including the Global Wales Programme under the Karnataka–Wales Universities Partnership.

As part of the agreement, both institutions will organize academic and cultural exchange programs, student and faculty exchange initiatives, joint research projects, seminars, conferences, workshops, and training programs. A key focus of the collaboration is the establishment of a research cluster dedicated to Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI), highlighting the growing importance of ethical and sustainable technology.

The MoU also facilitates the exchange of academic materials, research publications, and educational resources in accordance with intellectual property laws. Short-term academic and cultural programs for students are also included to enhance global exposure and learning experiences.

Speaking on the occasion, Mangalore University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dharma said the agreement would offer long-term benefits to both students and teachers, opening new avenues for international recognition, collaborative research, and academic excellence. Bearys Knowledge Campus Director Dr. S. I. Manjur Basha emphasized the institution's commitment to quality education, research, and industry-oriented learning. BIT Principal Dr. Kamalakannan C highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary research, innovation, and sustainable technological development.

Senior faculty members from both institutions were present during the signing ceremony.

Asaigoli residents allege changes to original road plan

KONAJE

Warning of legal action, the locals demanded that the original project plan be preserved without any alterations and sought an official site inspection. They said details would be sought under the Right to Information Act and court action would follow if needed

Residents of Asaigoli in Konaje have alleged that attempts are being made to alter the original design of the four-lane road currently under construction in the area. Raising concerns over these alleged modifications and various hurdles affecting the project, locals submitted a petition to the Konaje Gram Panchayat on Friday, demanding immediate resolution of the issues. In the memorandum, residents urged authorities to clear buildings abutting the road to facilitate land acquisition required for road widening. They also demanded that affected shopkeepers be provided with suitable alternative arrangements to protect their livelihoods.

Social activist Arun D'Souza, who expressed strong dissatisfaction during the submission, said roadwork is being hampered as water and electricity pipelines have not yet been shifted underground. He alleged that despite the gram panchayat issuing notices asking shop owners to vacate premises by December 31, some individuals are lobbying behind the scenes to retain their shops, thereby delaying the project.

He further accused certain people of trying to modify the original road blueprint under the pretext of preserving old buildings, which he said was obstructing construction. Authorities have already marked an 18-metre-wide land stretch for the four-lane road and issued orders to demolish old structures and disconnect power supply. However, Arun alleged that covert interference continues.

Residents also demanded a comprehensive development plan that includes construction of new shops on both sides of the road with essential public amenities. They called for proper drainage, drinking water supply, and well-equipped bus and auto-rickshaw stands as part of the project.

Local resident Ronald D'Souza said a complaint was submitted to the PDO regarding obstruction to demolition on one side of the road, adding that officials assured resolution by evening. Panchayat Development Officer Rajani accepted the petition and assured prompt action.

"Meltane" e-magazine launched

DERLAKATTE

The release ceremony of Meltane, an e-magazine brought out by Meltane (Beary Eldhkar – Artists' Collective), was held on Sunday at the Elite Tuition Centre in Vijayanagar, Natekal, near Derlakatte. The event was attended by Meltane Honorary President Alikunji Pare, President Mangaluru Riyaz, General Secretary Hamza Malar, Treasurer V. Ibrahim Nadupadavu, Vice President Ibrahim Rafiq Mudungarukatte, and Joint Secretary C. M. Shareef Pattori.

Several members of the collective, including Ismail Master, Basheer Ahmed Kinya, Muhammad Basha Natekal, Basheer Kalkatte, Yusuf Vakthar, and Abubakkar Hoohakuvakallu, also participated. The gathering highlighted the collective's efforts to promote Beary art, culture, and creative expression through digital platforms.

'Blind devotion to political leaders a threat to the constitution'

BANTWAL

Warning against hero-worship of political leaders, senior advocate and All India Lawyers Association for Justice (AILAJ) National General Secretary Clifton D'Rosario said blind devotion to politicians poses a serious threat to the Indian Constitution. He was speaking at a seminar titled "Challenges Before the Constitution" organised by the Dakshina Kannada district unit of AILAJ and Legal Friends at Ambedkar Bhavan, BC Road, Bantwal.

D'Rosario said the growing tendency to treat political leaders as heroes weakens the very spirit of the Constitution. When citizens become devotees, they lose the courage to question authority, he said, adding that Dr B.R. Ambedkar had warned as early as 1974 about this danger. Such unquestioning loyalty, he noted, must be seen as one of the gravest challenges facing the Constitution today.

He stressed that social and economic equality are central to democracy, but poverty continues to obstruct the realisation of constitutional ideals. According to him, the poor are often deprived of the opportunity to think and act as informed citizens, which makes it difficult for them to internalise constitutional values.

Referring to rising communal divisions, D'Rosario said many youths are building walls of religion and called for dismantling such barriers to enable a life aligned with constitutional principles. He underlined the need to practise the Constitution in everyday life and to develop an education system that promotes equality and justice.

Recalling the Emergency period during Indira Gandhi's tenure, he said attempts were made to alter the basic structure of the Constitution, but the Supreme Court's intervention protected its core principles.

Senior advocate Manoraj Rajeev spoke on how citizens can respond to constitutional challenges. Several senior and young advocates, AILAJ members, and legal professionals attended the programme, which concluded with readings and discussions on constitutional values.

Kavya Rani assumes charge as new SDO in Hunsur

HUNSUR

Kumari Kavya Rani formally assumed charge as the new Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of the Hunsur subdivision at a programme held at the subdivision office. The occasion marked an important administrative transition, with senior officials and staff extending a warm welcome to the newly appointed officer.

During the charge-taking ceremony, Hunsur Tahsildar Manjunath and Tahsildar Yadav Girish from the Sub-Divisional Officer's office greeted Kavya Rani by presenting her with a bouquet and conveying their best wishes for a successful tenure. Several other officials and staff members were also present and participated in the welcoming programme.

Speaking briefly on the occasion, officials expressed confidence that Kavya Rani's leadership would strengthen administrative efficiency and improve coordination between various departments within the subdivision. They noted that effective governance at the sub-divisional level plays a crucial role in delivering public services, addressing local issues, and implementing government schemes efficiently.

The newly appointed SDO thanked the officials for their warm reception and assured them of her commitment to transparent, people-oriented, and efficient administration. She emphasized the importance of teamwork and said she looked forward to working closely with all departments to ensure smooth functioning of the administration and timely redressal of public grievances.

The event concluded on a positive note, with officials expressing hope that Kavya Rani's tenure would contribute to improved governance and development across the Hunsur subdivision.

Hunsur Municipality flags off new waste collection vehicles and excavator

HUNSUR

The Hunsur City Municipal Council has strengthened its solid waste management infrastructure with the addition of new waste collection vehicles and an excavator, purchased under the municipal fund and the 15th Finance Commission scheme. The newly acquired vehicles were formally flagged off by local MLA G.T. Harish Gowda at a programme held in the premises of the Hunsur City Municipal Council office.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Harish Gowda said effective waste management is essential for maintaining public health and environmental cleanliness in urban areas. He noted that the introduction of modern waste collection vehicles and machinery would significantly improve door-to-door garbage collection, transportation of waste, and timely disposal, thereby helping keep the city clean and hygienic. He also stressed the need for public cooperation in waste segregation and responsible disposal practices to ensure the success of municipal initiatives.

Municipal Commissioner Manasa highlighted that the new vehicles were procured using municipal council funds along with allocations from the 15th Finance Commission, aimed at strengthening civic infrastructure. She said the excavator would be particularly useful for clearing waste dumps, maintaining drains, and handling emergency sanitation-related works within the city limits.

Environmental Engineer Soumya and other municipal officials were present during the event and briefed attendees on how the new equipment would enhance operational efficiency.

They added that the municipality plans to further upgrade sanitation services in the coming months.

Former MLA honours gold medallist at felicitation ceremony

HUNSUR

A meritorious student who won multiple gold medals at the 106th annual convocation of the University of Mysore was honoured in Hunsur by former MLA H.P. Manjunath, who presented her with a gold ring in recognition of her achievement.

The achiever, Hamaina, is the daughter of KSRTC employee Tayyab Ahmed and schoolteacher Rukhsana from Marur village, which falls under the Hirikyatanahalli Gram Panchayat limits of Gavada Gere Hobli in Hunsur taluk. Hamaina secured an impressive six gold medals and five cash prizes at the university convocation. She was felicitated at a special programme held in her native village of Marur.

Hamaina received her honours at the 106th convocation ceremony held at Crawford Hall in Mysuru, where Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, Higher Education Minister M. Sudhakar, former ISRO Chairman Dr. S. Somanath, Vice-Chancellor N.K. Lokanath, Registrar Savitha, and other dignitaries congratulated her.

Speaking on the occasion, former MLA Manjunath said it was a matter of great pride that the daughter of a bus conductor from the taluk had brought such distinction by excelling in higher education. He said he has consistently made it a point to identify and honour students from the taluk who achieve academic excellence, irrespective of whether he holds office. He reaffirmed his lifelong commitment to the people of the region.

Accepting the honour, Hamaina thanked H.P. Manjunath for visiting the village and encouraging students like her. She said such recognition motivates young learners and assured her continued cooperation in inspiring students.

Several dignitaries, local leaders, committee members, parents, and villagers were present at the programme.

FATAL CAR ACCIDENT

Kolhapur DySP Vaishnavi's car crashes near Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA

A tragic road accident claimed two lives after a car carrying Kolhapur Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Vaishnavi met with a fatal crash near Chitradurga in Karnataka. The accident occurred close to the bridge at Tamatakallu village when the driver reportedly lost control while attempting to overtake a vehicle and rammed into a lorry.

The victims who died on the spot were DySP Vaishnavi's mother, Kamal Haribabu (65), and the car's driver, Rakesh (40). DySP Vaishnavi survived the crash but sustained injuries. She was immediately rushed to a private hospital in Chitradurga, where she is currently undergoing treatment. Doctors said her condition is stable and she narrowly escaped a life-threatening situation.

According to preliminary information, the Innova car was travelling from Maharashtra toward Bengaluru. During the journey, the driver tried to overtake another vehicle in haste and collided with a lorry, leading to the devastating impact. Besides the two fatalities, three other occupants of the car were injured in the accident.

Following the incident, Chitradurga Rural Police Circle Inspector Balachandra Naik visited the spot and carried out an inspection. Police registered a case at the Chitradurga Rural Police Station and initiated further investigation to ascertain the exact sequence of events and responsibilities.

The accident has sent shockwaves through police circles and the local community, highlighting once again the dangers of rash overtaking and high-speed driving on highways.

QUICK READ

Tractor-tipper collision claims life

Raichur

A tragic accident occurred near the Lingasugur Road bypass on the outskirts of Raichur city when a tipper truck collided with a fully loaded tractor, resulting in the immediate death of the person on board. The deceased has been identified as 55-year-old Nagaraj, a resident of Gorkal village. Nagaraj had been transporting a load of paddy from Gorkal to Raichur city for sale when the tipper truck hit the rear of his tractor. The impact caused him to fall from the tractor, and he succumbed to his injuries at the scene. Police are investigating the incident.

Free hearing camp and hearing aid assistance

Karkala

A free hearing screening and hearing aid assistance program was organized on January 11 at the Saraswat Sabha Hall of Rajapur Saraswat Credit Cooperative Society, led by the Karkala Taluk Working Journalists' Association with support from Team Eshwar Malpe. Surendra Nayak, Chief Manager of the credit society, inaugurated the camp, urging that benefits reach those in need. Dr. Ankita Kalmadi emphasized the importance of ear care, advising proper use of locally available devices and digital tools for accurate testing. The event saw around 19 participants, with 8 individuals receiving financial aid for hearing devices. Dr. Kalmadi conducted the hearing examinations. Key attendees included B. Harish Acharya, Uday Prabhu, and members of Team Eshwar Malpe.

Baderiya Mosque: New committee elected

Bangerkatte

The annual general meeting of Baderiya Juma Mosque was held at the Nurul Huda Madrasa premises on Friday, during which the new administrative committee for 2026 was elected. Iqbal Bangerkatte was chosen as the new president, Hakim Royal as vice-president, Hanif T.S as general secretary, Yusuf Ballamanj as treasurer, and Hameed Salumar along with Iqbal Royal as joint secretaries. The selection of the honorary president, held once every three years, saw Ismail P.K appointed to the position. The newly elected team aims to oversee mosque activities and community initiatives for the upcoming year.

VB-G RAM G weakens rural economy: Min Ishwar Khandre

Karnataka Minister Khandre criticizes Centre's VB-G RAM G scheme, warning it undermines MGNREGA and rural economic security

BIDAR

Karnataka's District In-Charge Minister Ishwar Khandre strongly criticized the Central BJP government's move to gradually weaken and now completely replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the new VB-G RAM G Yojana (Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin), calling it a direct blow to the rural economy.

Speaking at a press conference at the District Journalists' Association building on Sunday, the minister said MGNREGA has been a lifeline for crores of poor, landless laborers, and agriculture-dependent families across rural India. It provides guaranteed employment and food security. Replacing it with a new scheme that lacks true employment assurance amounts to an attack on constitutional values, he alleged.

The minister pointed out that MGNREGA was introduced in 2005 by the UPA government as a revolutionary program to decentralize power and empower villages. Panchayats were given authority to implement it, creating 100 days of work for the poorest rural households — making it the world's first such large-scale initiative.

However, under Prime Minister Modi, the government is snatching away the poor's employment rights through this "dark law," he charged. Khandre accused the Centre of wanting to prevent the poor from becoming economically strong, instead channeling funds to capitalists. He claimed the government is burdening the stomachs of the poor to fill the pockets of the rich.

The BJP-led Centre has zero achievements of its own and is merely renaming and re-implementing UPA-era programs, while weakening states' powers and federal structure, he said. The new VB-G Ramji scheme will increase unemployment nationwide. It forces workers to accept work only at designated locations, limits Gram Panchayat flexibility, and raises the states' funding share from 10% to 40%, imposing a heavy financial burden on them.

The minister accused the BJP of spreading false propaganda against MGNREGA and misleading people about the new scheme to cover up its failures. He announced that Congress is launching a nationwide awareness movement to demand the scrapping of VB-G Ramji Yojana and continuation of MGNREGA.

The press meet was attended by former minister Rajshekhar Patil, MLCs Dr. Chandrashekhar Patil and Bhimrao Patil, District Congress President Basavaraj Jabashhetti, Guarantee Schemes District President Amritrao Chimakode, and others including Mohammad Sami, George Fernandes, and senior party leaders.

Book released by Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist Leaders

'Sowharada Bharat' urges unity beyond caste and religion, promoting peace, harmony, and cultural solidarity while condemning hatred and communal politics

RAMANAGARA

The book Sowharada Bharat, authored by Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa, was released at M.H. College auditorium on Sunday, highlighting the importance of building a harmonious India beyond caste and religious divisions. Speaking at the event, writer Dr. K. Sharifa emphasised that "hatred must be set aside to construct a united India. The state government is taking steps to implement anti-hate speech legislation, but those exploiting religious hatred for political gain resist such measures." She stressed that messages of peace and unity should resonate everywhere.

Dr. Sharifa also drew attention to societal inequalities, saying, "Before independence, the British looted the nation; today, corporate forces perpetuate similar exploitation. This injustice under the shadow of democracy must end." She condemned the Gujarat government's release of 11 convicts in the Bilkis Banu case, citing it as evidence of how communal interests continue to undermine justice.

City Council President K. Sheshadri Shashi, who presided over the event, expressed concern over communal forces influencing media outlets to fuel hatred between communities. He added, "Truth exists beyond temples, yet devotion is not wrong. Like water called differently in various languages, the one God is known by many names. We must defeat the evil within and live in harmony."

Dr. H.D. Umashankar of Nammavaru noted, "We live in challenging times. To counter rising communalism among youth, we must actively promote the harmony that defines our identity."

The programme included cultural and literary contributions: R. Nagaraju welcomed guests, Padmarekha delivered the introduction, Shivarahalli Shivkumar sang peace songs, and prominent figures such as Kumabapura V. Babu, Dr. Ankanahalli Partha, Piyush principals' association president Kottipur Shivanna, district Kannada Sahitya Parishat president B.T. Nagesh, folk scholar Dr. M. Bairegowda, and Dalit organization leader Shivakumar Swami attended, along with other literary and social leaders.

The event underlined the urgent need to replace hatred with understanding and strengthen India's cultural unity across religions and communities.

28th DK Kannada Literary Conference on March 27–28

BANTWAL

The 28th Dakshina Kannada District Kannada Sahitya Sammelana will be held on March 27 and 28 at the Sparsha Kala Mandira on BC Road in Bantwal, with the support and cooperation of literature enthusiasts from Bantwal taluk. The announcement was made by District Kannada Sahitya Parishat President Dr. M. P. Sreenath.

He shared the details while addressing a preparatory meeting organised by the District Kannada Sahitya Parishat committee at the Sparsha Kala Mandira. Dr. Sreenath said the two-day literary conference would feature a grand Bhuvaneshwari procession, a range of cultural programmes, and multiple discussion sessions. The event will provide a platform for talented writers and poets from Bantwal and across Dakshina Kannada district. Opportunities will also be given for book releases during the conference.

Participants at the meeting stressed the need to hold special discussions on the challenges faced by Kannada language and Kannada-speaking communities in border areas. They also expressed the view that seminar topics should be designed to attract people from all sections of society and encourage wider public participation.

Several office-bearers and members of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat were present at the meeting, including Bantwal Taluk KSP President Vishwanath Bantwal; honorary secretaries V. Su. Bhatt and Ramananda Noojippady; treasurer Abdul Rahman D.B.; district KSP members Poovappa Neralakatte and Subhashchandra Jain; Vittla Hobli KSP President Ganesh Prasad Pandelu; and senior literary figures such as Kaiyuru Narayana Bhatt, Devappa Kulal Panjikallu, H. K. Nayanadu, Sankappa Shetty, Jayananda Peraje, Prof. M. D. Manchi, Jayaram Padre, Sonita K. Neralakatte, Ummar Manchi, Sairam Nayak, Geetha Konkodi, Sanmathi Jayakeerthi, Damodara Erya, and Shrikala Karant.

Over 12,000 participate in 'Fit Mysuru' Walkathon in Mysuru

MYSURU

The "Fit Mysuru" walkathon, a massive public health and awareness initiative, saw an overwhelming participation of over 12,000 people in the cultural city of Mysuru. Organized with the goal of promoting a fit, healthy, clean, green, and safe Mysuru, the 5 km walkathon was conducted with the support of Mysuru University, Mysuru City Corporation, Mysuru Gym Association, GSS Group, and numerous local organizations.

The organizers had initially targeted 10,000 participants and had pre-registered around 7,000–8,000 people. However, on Sunday morning, students from schools and colleges, yoga enthusiasts, amateur athletes, and citizens of all age groups joined, surpassing expectations and making the event a memorable one.

The walkathon began at the Open-Air Theater of Mysuru University and followed a route through Bogadi Road, Saraswatipuram Fire Station Road, Maharaja College Ground, Krishnaraj Boulevard, Hunsuru Main Road, and Padavarahalli Junction, concluding at the Senate Hall premises. The enthusiastic crowd, waving green flags, walked together to convey the importance of fitness and public health.

District In-Charge Minister Dr. H.C. Mahadevapppa flagged off the event, emphasizing the initiative's goal of making Mysuru a healthier and cleaner city. Speaking at the event, he said, "The Fit Mysuru walkathon has been extremely successful, spreading the message that health is paramount, and it's heartening to see such widespread participation."

Member of Parliament Sunil Bose also praised the enthusiasm of participants, noting that the response exceeded expectations and highlighted the city's commitment to becoming greener, cleaner, and more health-conscious.

The event was attended by notable dignitaries, including MLAs T.S. Srivats, C.N. Manjegowda, Regional Commissioner Nitesh Patil, District Commissioner G. Lakshmikant Reddy, Mysuru City Commissioner Sheikh Tanveer, City Police Commissioner Seema Latkar, and Police Superintendent Mallikarjun Baldandi, among others, celebrating the city's collective commitment to fitness and well-being.

Alleged illegal encroachment on private land

KAMPLI

C.A. Channappa, Kumpli district president of the Ambedkar Swabhimani Sangha, has alleged that certain individuals are attempting to illegally encroach upon private land in the town.

Speaking at a press conference held at the town guest house on Saturday, Channappa said the land in Survey No. 1400, located in Wards 4 and 6, spans 5 acres and 34 cents. Of this, 50 cents is reportedly being targeted for illegal acquisition. He added that some individuals have falsely claimed the plot as government property to the municipal council in an attempt to seize it. The legally recognized 50 cents of land has already been cleared, while 104 residential plots have been sold, leaving only 50 cents remaining.

Channappa emphasized that the remaining land must not be allowed to fall into the hands of unauthorized parties. He also alleged that municipal officials have been misled by fraudulent submissions on Form No. 3, attempting to manipulate official records to benefit encroachers.

The press meet was attended by key local leaders, including Basappa Bhavikatti, district vice-president of the Ambedkar Vad (Prof. B. Krishnappa) organization, Prithviraj Singh of the Bhimvad Sangha, and youth leaders I. Shankar and Huseinappa. The group urged authorities to verify records carefully and take prompt action to protect private property from illegal claims, ensuring that landowners' rights are preserved.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SURESH BAHADUR S/o RAM BAHADURU, R/o Ramaiah Garden, 5th Main, 6th Cross, Malleshpalaya, New Thippasandra, Bangalore North, Bangalore, Karnataka - 560075, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SURESH KHATI.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NAGENDRA SWAMY G S S/o SIDDEGOWDA R/o No 58, Gollahalli, Kolliganahalli, Kanakapura, Ramanagar, Karnataka-562112, have changed the name of my minor daughter ABHISHREE S GOWDA aged 6 years and she shall hereafter be known as ADVIKA.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MANOHARA T R S/o TIPPAGONDANAHALLI VENKATARAVANAPPA RANGAPPA R/o 012, Ground Floor, Icon SN Luxuria Apt, Bileshivale Village, Next to Essel Gardens, Kothanur, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560077, have changed the name of my minor son PREETHAM GOWDA M aged 11 years and he shall hereafter be known as VIRAJ GOWDA.

IKF Home Finance Limited

Equinox by Phoenix-Tower 3,10th Floor,Diamond Hills, Lumbini Avenue, Rai Durg, Gachibowli, Hyderabad Telangana - 500081

POSSESSION NOTICE FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY [(Appendix IV) Rule 8(1)]

WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of **IKF Home Finance Ltd.** (hereinafter referred to as "IKF") under Secuitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assests and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice dated mentioned below under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the borrowers (names mentioned below) to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers mentioned herein below having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein below and to the public in general that the undersigned has Taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers mentioned here in above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **"IKF"** for an amount as mentioned herein under and interest thereon.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) LAN	Description of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
1.	**Lan :- LNDVN04023-240010210** **1. Mr/Mrs. K Shivakumar** **2. Mr/Mrs. Varalakshmi M** **3. Mr/Mrs. Krishnappa C H** **Add For Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3 :** Chikkaballapur Karnataka Nagamangala Postchokkandahalli Grama, Chikballapur, Karnataka, India. **And Also At For Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3:** Site No. 184/ B, Chokondahalli Village, Sidhlugatha Taluk, Chikabalapura Dist., Near Bus Stop - 562102.	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Extract of E Swathu Katha No. D R No.184/B assigned to the Katha No.D R No.184/B, Property No.152800600200720202, measuring East to West 10.05 meter and North to South 9.75 meter, situated at Hosapete Village, Chokkondahalli, Jangamakote Hobli, Shidlaghatta Taluk, Chickballapura, comprising of a building and **Bounded by: East by:** Road; **West by:** Mr. Sri Ramappa, son of Mr. Hanumantharayappa; **North by:** Road; **South by:** Mr. Yathish.	**13.10.2025 Rs. 11,59,601.42/-** (Rupees Eleven lakh Fifty Nine Thousand Six Hundred One and Forty Two Paise Only)	**08.01.2026**

Place : Chickballapura, Karnataka
Date : 08.01.2026

Sd/-
Authorized Officer
For IKF Home Finance Limited

BHARATANATYAM CULTURAL SYMBOL

Bharatanatyam is symbol of culture: Lekhana Kulkarni

RAMANAGARA

Renowned Bharatanatyam exponent and head of Nataraja Natya Kendra, Vidushi Lekhana Kulkarni, described Bharatanatyam as one of the most ancient art forms and a true symbol of India's rich cultural heritage. She stressed that preserving this cultural legacy is a responsibility that rests largely with the younger generation.

She was speaking after inaugurating Nritya Vaibhavam–2026, organised on the occasion of the third anniversary of Lalita Nritya Kala Mandira at Ambedkar Bhavan in Ramanagara on Sunday. Kulkarni said that in a land known for its linguistic and cultural diversity, such cultural programmes play a vital role in strengthening and sustaining shared traditions.

Emphasising that Bharatanatyam is far more than a dance form, she said it represents India's deep-rooted traditions, spiritual depth, and artistic excellence. She noted that the Ramanagara region is home to many talented artistes and appreciated Lalita Kala Mandira for identifying, nurturing, and promoting such talent while imparting training in Bharatanatyam.

Addressing the gathering, Lalita Kala Mandira Secretary K.M. Chikkamayyegowda said the institution is committed to preserving and promoting Bharatanatyam, an art form intrinsic to the region's culture. He observed that a nation's culture finds its truest expression through art, often conveying emotions and ideas beyond the power of words. Art, he said, must be respected and cherished by everyone, as classical forms like Bharatanatyam stand as living testimony to a vibrant society.

As part of the Nritya Vaibhavam–2026 celebrations, students presented captivating Bharatanatyam performances. A thillana dedicated to Goddess Parvati, "Namaste Rudra Roopini," evoked deep devotional God among the audience. Presentations such as shabdam, varnam, and padam enthralled parents and art lovers alike.

Lalita Nritya Kala Mandira President Vidushi D. Nagaveni, Treasurer Vidushi C. Chinmayi, Vidwan P. Janardana Rao, Vinay Manya, B.R. Hemanth Kumar, and others were present at the event.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

QUICK READ

Vijay to appear before CBI on January 12

Chennai

Actor and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president Vijay is set to appear before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in New Delhi on Monday in connection with the probe into the Karur campaign stampede that claimed 41 lives last year, party sources said on Sunday. Vijay is scheduled to depose at around 11 a.m., following a summons issued by the CBI on January 6 under Section 179 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). He has been cited as a witness in the case. After consultations with senior legal counsel and party functionaries, Vijay has decided to cooperate fully with the investigation and comply with the summons.

Bone chilling cold wave continues in J&K

Srinagar

The intense dry cold wave continued unabated in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, with night temperatures throughout the Valley remaining several notches below zero. A feeble winter sun rose in the clear sky as water taps and the road puddles froze completely, while the Dal Lake in Srinagar city froze in parts. People were seen lighting small fires around the water taps to de-freeze them in the morning. Srinagar city had minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, Gulmarg ski resort had minus 6.2, and Pahalgam minus 7.6 as a minimum temperature.

Seven-year-old girl raped in Uttar Pradesh

Etawah

A man accused of rape of a seven-year-old girl was arrested in a police encounter in Uttar Pradesh's Etawah district, just hours after the crime was committed. According to the police, the accused, a resident of the Basrehar village of Etawah district, lured the seven-year-old girl with chocolates and raped her in broad daylight. He fled the scene after committing the crime. When the victim's family found out, they filed a complaint, and the police immediately swung into action and arrested the accused within hours of the complaint being filed. The accused was injured in the encounter and has been sent to the district hospital for treatment.

PM Modi pays tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

PM Modi paid homage to Somnath Temple's legacy, recalling Sardar Patel's pivotal post-Independence role nationwide today.

SOMNATH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid rich tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for his historic contribution to the restoration of the Somnath Temple after India attained Independence. The Prime Minister also offered floral tributes to the countless warriors and devotees who laid down their lives defending the sacred shrine across centuries, underscoring the temple's enduring place in India's civilisational consciousness.

The occasion marked the observance of the 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', an event that commemorates the temple as a powerful symbol of India's spiritual strength, cultural continuity, and resilience in the face of repeated invasions. The Prime Minister highlighted that the festival not only honours the architectural and religious significance of the shrine but also remembers the sacrifices of generations who ensured that the temple rose again every time it was destroyed.

Significantly, the year 2026 marks one thousand years since the Somnath Temple was first attacked by invaders in January 1026. This milestone has added deeper historical resonance to the current commemorations. Alongside this, the year also marks 75 years since the modern reconstruction of the temple, which was inaugurated in 1951 by then President Rajendra Prasad.

In a blog post earlier, the Prime Minister recalled that the sacred responsibility of rebuilding the Somnath Temple fell upon Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel soon after Independence. He noted that Patel viewed the reconstruction not merely as a religious task, but as a national duty aimed at restoring India's cultural self-respect.

PM Modi also reflected on the historical context of the period, mentioning that the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was not supportive of associating top constitutional authorities with the temple's rebuilding. Despite this, Patel remained resolute in his vision.

ECI Assigns Key Tasks to Additional Roll Observers

KOLKATA

Election Commission appointed four additional roll observers to strengthen document verification and supervision during voter list revision in West Bengal.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has entrusted four newly appointed additional roll observers with two specific and critical responsibilities to review the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal. The move is aimed at enhancing transparency, accuracy, and adherence to established guidelines during the revision process.

According to sources in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer West Bengal, the first major assignment for the special roll observers is to scrutinise the identity documents submitted by voters categorised under logical discrepancy during hearings on claims and objections related to the draft voters' list. These observers will be required to certify whether the documents produced by such voters are valid, thereby adding an additional layer of verification.

Earlier, the ECI had prescribed a two-stage verification mechanism for cases involving logical discrepancies. Under that system, identity documents were first examined by the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and then verified by the District Magistrates, who also function as District Electoral Officers. However, sources said that the Commission has now expanded this process into a three-stage checking mechanism, with the special roll observers conducting the final and decisive stage of verification.

The second assignment given to these observers involves monitoring the performance of micro-observers appointed by the ECI to oversee the smooth conduct of hearing sessions. These micro-observers are meant to ensure that proceedings follow the Commission's guidelines in letter and spirit. However, the ECI reportedly received inputs suggesting that some micro-observers were not fully complying with the prescribed norms during hearings.

In view of these concerns, the special roll observers have been directed to supervise the functioning of micro-observers and ensure corrective measures wherever required. Officials emphasised that the overarching objective of this exercise is to protect the integrity of the electoral rolls.

Suvendu Adhikari advice to CEC on Mamata Banerjee's SIR allegations

KOLKATA

The Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, has addressed a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, countering the allegations made by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in her correspondence to the CEC regarding the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR). He has described these allegations as baseless, exaggerated, and blown out of proportion. Adhikari on Sunday morning shared a copy of the letter on his X handle. He said, I have written to the Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Gyanesh Kumar, strongly countering the baseless, blown out of proportion and exaggerated allegations made by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in her letter dated January 10, 2026, regarding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls.

The BJP leader further said, I would again reiterate that her claims are nothing but a desperate attempt to derail this crucial process, which is exposing the rot in our voter lists; bogus entries, duplicates, and infiltrators that have been nurtured under TMC's watch for years. This is damaging their electoral prospects, that's why now she is resorting to hysteria. The move from the BJP's Nandigram MLA came a day after Mamata Banerjee again wrote a letter to the CEC, alleging that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state was being carried out with the sole objective of deleting and excluding names of existing voters, rather than correcting errors or including new voters.

In her letter, the Chief Minister has said that her observation in the matter was because of the manner in which the Commission has been categorising voters under the logical discrepancy category and summoning them for hearings on claims and objections on the draft voters list, causing inconvenience and harassment to genuine and innocent voters.

Heavy Sankranti travel triggered massive congestion on Hyderabad–Vijayawada highway as families rushed to native places Sunday.

Sankranti Rush Chokes Hyderabad–Vijayawada Highway

HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad–Vijayawada national highway witnessed unprecedented congestion on Sunday as thousands of families began their journeys to native towns and villages to celebrate Sankranti, the biggest festival in the two Telugu-speaking states. From early morning hours, cars, buses, and other transport vehicles lined up at multiple toll plazas, reflecting the scale of festive travel.

A particularly heavy rush was reported at the Pattangi toll plaza near Hyderabad, where vehicles queued up for kilometres as travellers headed towards destinations across Telangana and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. With educational institutions observing a week-long holiday, many families opted to travel together, adding to the pressure on the highway.

Authorities responded by opening additional toll gates at Pattangi to ease congestion. Officials said the FASTag system helped maintain relatively smoother movement through the toll plaza, even as traffic volumes surged. Toll plaza staff reported that nearly 70,000 vehicles crossed towards Andhra Pradesh from Telangana between 6 p.m. on Saturday and 6 a.m. on Sunday alone, with the numbers expected to rise further as the day progressed.

Despite these measures, vehicles were moving at a snail's pace. A journey that usually takes about an hour from Hyderabad to Pattangi toll plaza stretched to three to four hours on Sunday. A kilometre-long traffic jam was observed near Pattangi, with similar snarls reported at Korlapahad and Chillakallu toll plazas. Patrolling vehicles, cranes, and ambulances were deployed at key points to respond to emergencies and ensure smoother traffic flow.

Traffic congestion was also reported at Peddakaparthy and Chityala in Nalgonda district, where ongoing road construction aggravated the situation. Police appealed to motorists to use an alternate route to Vijayawada via Bhongir to avoid the worst-hit stretches. Senior police officials, including the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri Superintendent of Police, were seen supervising traffic regulation on the ground.

In Suryapet district, police diverted vehicles heading towards Khammam and Rajahmundry through alternate routes.

Three drug peddlers arrested, contraband recovered

SRINAGAR

Three drug peddlers were arrested, and contraband was recovered from their possession in two separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore district, police said on Sunday. Continuing its sustained drive against drug trafficking, Sopore Police has apprehended three drug peddlers in separate NDPS cases across Police District Sopore, leading to the seizure of contraband substances and registration of multiple FIRs, police said in a statement.

In the first incident, Police Station Bomai established a naka on the Nathipora–Tujjer link road. During the check, a suspicious person attempted to flee but was apprehended. Upon search, a 'charas-like' substance was recovered from his possession. The accused was identified as Umar Mohammad, a resident of Sheikhpora Tujjer.

Accordingly, FIR No. 03/2026 under Sections 8/20 NDPS Act was registered at PS Bomai, and investigation was initiated, it added.

In another case, Police Post Warpora established a naka at Poultry Crossing, Dangerpora Road, where two suspicious persons attempted to evade checking but were tactfully apprehended.

Jammu and Kashmir Police have been carrying out aggressive operations against drug smugglers, drug peddlers and those involved in hawala money rackets and other unlawful financial activities.

Women-led development at the heart of Modi govt's policies: Hardeep Puri

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Sunday said that government schemes under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have transformed India's development journey by shifting the focus from women-centred welfare to women-led growth, ensuring dignity, security and greater participation of women in nation-building.

Puri was speaking after an interaction with professionals, industry leaders, academicians, entrepreneurs and students at the 'Professionals Connect 2026' conclave organised by the Tamil Nadu BJP Professional Cell in Coimbatore.

He described Coimbatore as a city that reflects enterprise, discipline and quiet confidence.

India's quest towards achieving energy security by strengthening and expanding the energy infrastructure across the entire hydrocarbons value chain, and the focus on green energy transition also play a key role in this journey of Viksit Bharat under PM Modi's leadership, Puri wrote on X.

I have had the privilege of being associated with several of PM Modi's visionary schemes that changed lives for the better and evoked interest around the world. These schemes have shifted the narrative from women-centred development to women-led development, he added.

During the discussion, Puri highlighted the positive impact of the Modi government's reforms and policies, saying they have strengthened the India growth story and placed the country on track to become the world's third-largest economy.

SUVENDU CONVOY ATTACK

MHA Seeks Report on Alleged Attack on Suvendu Adhikari's Convoy

KOLKATA

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has sought a detailed report on the alleged attack on the vehicle of Suvendu Adhikari, the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the West Bengal Assembly, according to sources in the Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday.

Sources said the Ministry of Home Affairs has asked for the report directly from the LoP's office. It has also been learned that the office of Suvendu Adhikari is in the process of sending video footage related to the incident to the Home Ministry for examination. The development comes amid heightened political tension in the state following the alleged attack.

Meanwhile, BJP workers and supporters staged protests in several districts of West Bengal on Sunday, condemning the alleged assault on Adhikari's car and demanding strict action against those responsible. Party leaders described the incident as a serious threat to democratic functioning and the safety of elected representatives.

According to available information, the convoy of Suvendu Adhikari was attacked at Chandrakona in West Midnapore district late. The LoP was returning to Kolkata after attending a political programme in Purulia district when the incident occurred.

Adhikari claimed that after his convoy crossed the four-point crossing near the Chandrakona Road Market area, some activists of the ruling Trinamool Congress suddenly blocked the road. He alleged that the activists were carrying Trinamool Congress flags and began obstructing the movement of his convoy.

The Leader of the Opposition further alleged that some ruling party activists attacked his convoy with bamboo sticks and even struck his bulletproof vehicle. He claimed that despite the disturbance continuing for a considerable period, local police personnel did not reach the spot in time to control the situation.

After managing to move away from the area, Adhikari reportedly went straight to the Chandrakona police outpost, where he sat on the floor in protest, demanding accountability from the police administration.

QUICK READ

Atishi's video 'tempering' part of BJP's conspiracy, says Punjab CM

Bathinda

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Sunday launched a rebuttal to the BJP over the tampering of former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi's Assembly video, declaring it a deliberate conspiracy to provoke communal unrest in Punjab. Asserting that the secular state government would not allow such designs to succeed, the Chief Minister said the video was edited with false subtitles, an act of 'beadbi' (sacrilege), and pointed out that forensic findings have conclusively established that Atishi never used the word Guru.

Nizam's grandson condemns BJP MP's remarks

Hyderabad

Nawab Najaf Ali Khan, one of the grandsons of seventh Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, on Sunday, condemned the alleged defamatory remarks made by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP D. Arvind against the last ruler of Hyderabad State while demanding that the Nizamabad district be renamed as Indur. Najaf Ali Khan termed the remarks of Nizamabad MP as highly objectionable, condemnable, and unbecoming of a constitutional office-holder. The proposal to rename Nizamabad as Indur is a separate administrative matter. Dragging the name of Nizam VII, who passed away 58 years ago.

Situation tense but under control in Tripura

Agartala

A day after clashes broke out between two communities over the collection of subscriptions for a local fair, the situation remained tense but calm in the Kumarghat subdivision of Tripura's Unakoti district on Sunday, police said. A senior police official in Agartala said that the police detained 10 persons from both communities. The official added that on Sunday, the police arrested seven of the detainees and presented them at a local court, seeking police custody. A huge contingent of Assam Rifles, Tripura State Rifles (TSR), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and state police were deployed in the trouble-torn areas.

'Today BJP Mayor, tomorrow it'll be CM': HM hopes for win in Kerala polls

Amit Shah predicts BJP will form government in Kerala in 2026, citing local body poll gains and attacking LDF-UDF governance and security record

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday expressed confidence that the BJP would register a major breakthrough in Kerala in the 2026 Assembly elections, asserting that the party's recent local body successes signal a larger political shift in the state. Addressing newly elected BJP representatives at the launch of the party's Mission 2026 programme in Thiruvananthapuram, Shah said the emergence of a BJP Mayor today would pave the way for a BJP Chief Minister tomorrow.

Referring to the recent local body polls, Shah said the BJP's historic win in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation marked a turning point and demonstrated growing public support beyond urban centres. He noted that the party had also secured victories in gram panchayats and municipalities, and emerged as a strong second force in several others.

Shah claimed the BJP's vote share in Kerala had steadily increased over the past decade—from 11 per cent in 2014 to nearly 20 per cent in 2024—and said expanding it further by 2026 was achievable, citing the party's growth in several states across the country. He argued that Kerala's development could be ensured only under a BJP-led government aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Viksit Bharat".

Launching sharp attacks on both the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, Shah accused the two fronts of "match-fixing" and alleged that their political understanding had hindered Kerala's progress. He also alleged that extremist organisations formed the vote base of both alliances, questioning their commitment to the state's security.

Raising the Sabarimala gold theft case, Shah accused the state government of shielding the real culprits and demanded a probe by a neutral investigation agency. He said the BJP would intensify protests and public outreach on the issue, asserting that only the BJP could safeguard both development and faith in Kerala.

Chirag Paswan Slams Tejashwi Yadav's Absence from Bihar

PATNA

Chirag Paswan criticised Tejashwi Yadav's absence from Bihar after elections, calling it demoralising for party workers.

Union Minister and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav, criticising his absence from Bihar following the party's poor performance in the state Assembly elections. Paswan described Tejashwi's decision to leave the state during an ongoing Assembly session as politically unwise and demoralising for RJD workers and supporters.

Addressing a press conference in Patna, Paswan said he had no objection to Tejashwi Yadav taking a personal vacation with his family. However, he stressed that holding a constitutional post comes with responsibilities that cannot be set aside at a critical political moment. Leaving Bihar in the middle of an Assembly session reflects poor political judgement and has discouraged RJD workers and supporters, Paswan said.

He further alleged that instead of introspecting on the reasons behind the electoral defeat and addressing the public, the RJD leader chose to remain absent from the state. According to Paswan, this absence sent a negative signal to party cadres who were looking for direction and reassurance after the setback in the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections.

Drawing a comparison with his own political conduct, Paswan recalled the aftermath of the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections. When our party lost in 2020, I appeared before the media the very next day, accepted the defeat, and explained the reasons behind it. RJD suffered a massive defeat in 2025, but Tejashwi Yadav has not shown similar accountability, he said.

Paswan also claimed that the RJD has remained politically weak since losing power in 2005. He alleged that the party's resurgence in later years depended heavily on external support. In 2010, the NDA won convincingly. In 2015, Nitish Kumar gave a lifeline to the RJD. In 2020, I gave political life to the RJD. Had the NDA contested the 2020 election united, the result would have mirrored the 2025 outcome, Paswan asserted. Responding to speculation about attempts to break the Grand Alliance, Paswan dismissed such suggestions, stating that the National Democratic Alliance remains strong.

Teenager killed in accidental firing incident in J&K

JAMMU

The teenage son of a village defence committee (VDC) member was killed in an accidental firing incident in J&K's Kishtwar district, officials said on Sunday. Officials said the 16-year-old son of a VDC member died when his father's rifle went off accidentally at their home in Kishtwar district.

VDG Pyare Lal was cleaning his rifle at his home in Loyee Dhar village of Mughal Maidan when it accidentally went off. The bullet hit his son, Anuj Kumar, who died on the spot. A police party immediately rushed to the spot and shifted the body of Kumar, a Class 10 student, to Chatroo hospital for post-mortem.

Inquest proceedings are underway to ascertain the circumstances leading to the firing. The weapon has been seized for forensic examination and statements of Kumar's family members are being recorded, officials said.

Village Defence Committees (VDCs), also called Village Defence Guards (VDGs), were formed in J&K to arm and train villagers for self-defence, especially against terrorists in remote areas.

Established in the 1990s, they comprise ex-servicemen and locals, acting as a force multiplier by leveraging local knowledge, and are now being revamped under the VDG scheme for vulnerable regions. Created in the mid-1990s in J&K's hilly regions to counter militant attacks, they provided security in areas where security forces often faced delays in reaching remote villages.

Sufi scholars met NSA Ajit Doval, pitching Sufi traditions as antidote to radicalism and tool for national unity.

Sufi Scholars Meet NSA Ajit Doval, Promote 'Mera Mulk Meri Pehchan'

NEW DELHI

A group of prominent Sufi scholars on Sunday met National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, seeking to promote the values of brotherhood, harmony, and national integration through the propagation of Sufi culture. The delegation underlined that Sufi traditions, rooted in compassion and inclusiveness, offer one of the most effective antidotes to radical and divisive ideologies.

The interaction was led by All India Sufi Sajjadanashin Council (AISSC) Chairman Hazrat Syed Naseruddin Chishty, who is also the successor to the spiritual head and hereditary Sajjadanashin (custodian) of the Ajmer Dargah. Chishty said NSA Doval appreciated the Council's initiative titled 'Mera Mulk, Meri Pehchan', which aims to strengthen a shared national identity that transcends religious differences.

We have launched a campaign called 'Mera Mulk, Meri Pehchan' to spread the message of one cultural and civilisational identity despite different faiths and religions, Chishty said. He added that the mission seeks to unite people of all communities under the common identity of being Indian, while reinforcing constitutional values and social harmony.

The meeting comes close on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi offering a ceremonial chadar at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah last month. The chadar was presented on his behalf by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju during the 814th annual Urs of revered Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

Chishty emphasised that Sufi shrines across India naturally foster unity, as people from all religions visit dargahs without discrimination. Sufi dargahs have always countered radical forces by welcoming everyone with open hearts, he said. Stressing national identity, he added, When we go anywhere in the world, we are known as Indians first, not by our religion.

He said the Council's mission is designed to propagate Sufi thought—centred on compassion, coexistence, and peace—and to counter extremist narratives that threaten social cohesion. Recalling the teachings of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz, Chishty said the eternal message of Sufism is love for all and hatred for none.

Man found dead under mysterious circumstances

KOLKATA

An elderly man was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Kolkata on Sunday, the police said. Kolkata Police recovered his body after breaking open the door of his house in the Amherst Street police station area.

The circumstances surrounding the man's death have created a mystery, as the elderly man was found without any clothing on the lower part of his body and no signs of injury were found. According to police sources, the deceased was identified as Amitabh Dey (62).

He lived alone in a two-storeyed house on Chintamani Das Lane. There had been no response from him at his residence. The elderly man's nephew, Debashish Daw, informed the police that he had last spoken to Amitabh on January 7.

Despite calling him multiple times, the elderly man did not answer his phone. Debashish even went to the house and called out to him repeatedly from outside. However, there was no response from the house. Following this, he informed the police.

Upon receiving the news, officers from Amherst Street Police Station went to the scene and broke open the door. They found the elderly man lying on the floor of the ground-floor living room with no clothing on the lower part of his body. He was quickly rescued and taken to Calcutta Medical College and Hospital. However, doctors declared him brought dead.

BJP's Tripura unit cautions members against party misrepresentation

AGARTALA

In a bizarre political development, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Tripura cautioned its members against misrepresenting the party's views or positions. BJP sources on Sunday said that one Hrishikesh Dey has been projecting himself as a leader for the past several days, claiming to be the next state president of the party.

Without taking Dey's name, Tripura BJP state committee stated that it has come to its notice that recently an individual has been falsely introducing himself as the prospective president of the BJP's Tripura unit and visiting various districts and mandals (state Assembly constituency) in the state to establish contact with party workers, thereby attempting to create confusion and misinformation.

The party clarified that, as per the BJP's organisational structure and constitution, the election or appointment of the state President and other office-bearers is carried out only through a defined, transparent, and constitutionally mandated organisational process.

The BJP Tripura Pradesh unit asserted that such activities, which are outside the party constitution, are against party discipline and are considered serious acts of indiscipline, state BJP's media-cell in-charge Sunit Sarkar said in a statement.

He said that at the direction of the state BJP President (Rajib Bhattacharjee), all district presidents, mandal presidents, and party workers have been informed that the party will not tolerate any form of indiscipline, misinformation, or activities carried out in violation of the party constitution.

Bandi Sanjay dares Owaisi to make burqa-clad woman AIMIM president

HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday dared AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi to make a burqa-clad woman the president of his party before dreaming of a woman in Hijab as the Prime Minister of India. The Central minister took to 'X' to react strongly to the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Owaisi's statement that a hijab-clad woman would one day become India's Prime Minister as the country's Constitution accords equal status to people from all communities.

Before dreaming of a Burqa-clad woman as Prime Minister of India, show the courage to make one the AIMIM chief. How many Muslim women has All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen actually given tickets to as MLAs or MPs? How many Muslim women hold real decision-making posts in the Majlis? asked Bandi Sanjay. Slogans cannot hide zero representation. In 2018, the BJP fielded Shahzadi Syed against Akbar Owaisi in the Old City. She was threatened, targeted, and defeated. This is ur true face. Today, she serves on the National Commission for Minorities. BJP has a Minority Morcha and grooms women leaders. What does AIMIM have beyond rhetoric? reads the post.

The BJP leader alleged that when Muslim women activists raise their voice and question the Majlis, they face intimidation.

When a journalist visits Owaisi's home, he is told he cannot even thank the women for the food because it is against their 'system'. We understand your fear. Muslim women can see your hypocrisy clearly, the BJP leader added.

Bandi Sanjay claimed that many Muslim women view Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an elder brother who acted in their interests instead of confining them.

OWAISI SLAMS SARMA

Owaisi Slams Asaam CM Over Remarks on PM's Religious Identity

NAGPUR

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday strongly criticised Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his assertion regarding the religious identity of India's top leadership, saying such views reflected what he described as Pakistani thinking.

The sharp exchange followed comments made by Sarma, in which he said that while the Constitution of India does not bar anyone from becoming Prime Minister, the country's civilisational ethos would ensure that the office remains with a Hindu. Responding to the statement, Owaisi said Sarma's remarks were unconstitutional and went against the spirit of India's founding principles.

His mind is like a tubelight. He took an oath on the Constitution. Where in the Constitution is this written? Owaisi asked, while addressing reporters. He added that Sarma's thinking resembled that of Pakistan, where constitutional provisions restrict the highest offices of the state to people from a particular community. In contrast, the Constitution of India, framed by B. R. Ambedkar, is far more inclusive and thoughtful, he said.

Owaisi further remarked that India does not belong to any single community and that its strength lies in diversity and inclusiveness. Even those who do not follow any religion have a place in this country. Such narrow-minded thinking reflects a petty mindset, he added.

Earlier, addressing the media, Sarma had clarified that there is no constitutional bar on who can occupy the highest executive office in the country. Anybody can become the Prime Minister of India, he said, while reiterating his view that India is essentially a Hindu civilisation and expressing confidence that future Prime Ministers would emerge from that civilisational framework.

The war of words between the two leaders follows a recent statement by Owaisi at a public meeting in Solapur, ahead of civic polls in Maharashtra, where he said that a hijab-wearing woman would one day become the Prime Minister of the country.

QUICK READ

Massive Cape wildfires force evacuations, spark alarm

CAPE TOWN

Wildfires burned more than 100,000 hectares across South Africa's Western Cape, spreading into parts of the Eastern Cape. Authorities ordered evacuations in Mossel Bay and Pearly Beach as dry winds worsened conditions. No deaths were reported, but a young girl was hospitalized and firefighters suffered smoke injuries. Premier Alan Winde said record numbers of helicopters, including military support, were fighting the flames. Local leaders stressed saving lives first, warned residents to stay alert, and said crews remain under pressure during peak tourism season, while communities await safer weather ahead.

Israel watches Iran closely amid rising tensions

TEL AVIV

Israel has gone on high alert as massive anti-government protests shake Iran, raising fears of possible United States involvement. Sources said Israeli leaders held urgent security meetings after President Donald Trump warned Iran against using force on demonstrators and said America was ready to help. Israel recently fought a brief war with Iran, increasing concern over escalation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the situation with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Officials said Israel is watching developments closely, especially amid worries over Iran's nuclear and missile programs. Regional tensions remain high as protests continue across Iran.

Japan PM may call early election

Takaichi's high approval may strengthen her mandate, but she hasn't confirmed dissolving parliament, focusing on economic relief instead

TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi may call an early general election as soon as February, according to a senior leader of her coalition partner. Media reports say the move is being considered just months after Takaichi took office, raising political and economic questions.

Hirofumi Yoshimura, head of the Japan Innovation Party, said he met Takaichi last week and sensed a clear shift in her thinking on election timing. While no specific date was discussed, reports suggest voting could take place on February 8 or February 15. If held, it would be Takaichi's first national election since becoming Japan's first female prime minister in October.

Takaichi has enjoyed strong public approval ratings, which could help her secure a stronger mandate. However, she has avoided confirming whether or when she plans to dissolve parliament. In a television interview, she said her current focus is on delivering economic relief to citizens facing rising prices.

A February election could disrupt the passage of Japan's next budget. Opposition leaders warned that dissolving parliament before budget approval could delay spending plans and force the government to rely on a temporary budget. Takaichi's proposed spending plan is large and aims to support growth and reduce the impact of inflation.

Signs of election preparation have already appeared. Japan's Internal Affairs Ministry has asked local election officials to be ready, fueling speculation that a snap poll is likely. Opposition parties have also begun preparing for a possible campaign.

Economic concerns add to the pressure. Japan faces stubborn food inflation and trade tensions with China, following diplomatic disputes over security issues. Analysts say an early election could either strengthen Takaichi's leadership or create uncertainty if economic plans are delayed.

Japan is not required to hold its next election until 2028. Still, a strong early victory could improve Takaichi's control over her coalition and help her push forward her policy agenda.

Maduro sends defiant message from US jail

CARACAS

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has sent a message of strength and determination to his supporters from jail in the United States, according to his son, lawmaker Nicolas Maduro Guerra. The message was shared during a meeting of leaders from the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Maduro Guerra said his father communicated through his lawyers, assuring family members and supporters that he is in good condition and remains firm despite his detention. Quoting the president, he said, "We are well. I am a fighter," a message meant to calm supporters and show resilience during a tense political moment. President Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were taken into custody after U.S. forces carried out military strikes in Caracas and three other Venezuelan cities on January 3. The operation, which led to their capture, sparked widespread concern and condemnation from several countries around the world.

Acting President Delcy Rodríguez pledged at a Miranda state event to work tirelessly for Maduro and Flores' return, insisting Venezuela's leadership and direction remain clear.

Maduro Guerra told party members that his father remains unbroken and confident. He stressed that unity is the key strength of the political movement known as Chavismo. He urged supporters to stay together, saying solidarity will help the country face its current challenges.

Acting President Delcy Rodriguez also addressed supporters at a community event in Miranda state. She promised that the government would work tirelessly to secure the return of Maduro and Flores. Rodriguez said there is no confusion about Venezuela's leadership or its governing direction.

MYANMAR VOTES AGAIN AMID MILITARY DOMINATED ELECTION

YANGON

Voters in Myanmar cast ballots again on Sunday in the second phase of a national election widely criticised as unfair and controlled by the ruling military. The vote comes as the country remains deeply divided and affected by ongoing conflict that began after the army seized power in 2021. Myanmar has been locked in violence since the military overthrew the elected civilian government and detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Fighting between the army and resistance groups has spread across large parts of the country, leaving thousands dead and millions displaced.

The election has been dominated by the military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, as major opposition groups are absent. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, which won previous elections by large margins, was dissolved for failing to register. Rebel groups have also refused to take part.

International bodies, including the United Nations, along with Western nations and rights groups, say the vote is an attempt to formalise military rule through civilian faces. They argue the process cannot be free or fair without real political competition.

The military, however, insists the election has public support. Officials defended the process after the first voting round in December recorded a turnout of about 52 percent. Junta leaders claim the election is a step toward democracy and peace. Some residents said people voted out of fear rather than choice. A Yangon resident said many worried about possible trouble if they did not vote.

Iran warns strong response amid rising protests

Continued from page 1

Iran has warned that it will strike back against Israel and U.S. military bases if the United States launches any attack, as large protests continue to spread across the country. The warning comes at a time when Iran is facing its biggest anti government unrest in years. Speaking in parliament on Sunday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf cautioned the United States against making what he called a serious mistake. He said that if Iran is attacked, Israel and all U.S. bases and ships in the region would become legitimate targets. His comments followed repeated warnings from U.S. President Donald Trump, who said Washington was ready to help protesters and urged Iranian leaders not to use force. The protests began on December 28 over rising prices and economic pressure but quickly turned into wider anger against Iran's ruling system. A U.S. based rights group reported that at least 116 people have been killed so far, including protesters and members of the security forces. Iranian authorities have increased security operations to control the unrest. Police chief Ahmad Reza Radan said forces are acting firmly against what the government calls rioters. State television has shown funeral processions for security personnel killed during the protests and reported attacks on public buildings, including a mosque. Internet access across Iran has been heavily restricted, making it difficult to confirm events on the ground. Despite this, videos on social media have shown large nighttime protests in parts of Tehran. Meanwhile, Israeli sources said Israel is on high alert in case the United States intervenes. Israel has not officially commented, but tensions remain high following a brief war between Israel and Iran last year.U.S. officials described the situation as a test of endurance, with protesters pushing for change and authorities trying to regain control without triggering foreign intervention.

Kim calls South Korea over drone violations

SEOUL

North Korea's powerful leader Kim Jong-un's sister Kim Yo-jong has demanded a clear explanation from South Korea over recent drone incursions, saying the flights violated the North's airspace and crossed a serious line. In a statement released through state media, Kim Yo-jong said drones from the South entered North Korean skies and gathered sensitive images. She said Seoul must explain how the incident happened, even though South Korea's Defence Ministry denied that its military was involved.

Kim welcomed the South's claim that its armed forces were not responsible and had no intention to provoke Pyongyang. However, she insisted that the violation itself could not be ignored and warned of severe consequences if similar incidents happen again. She said it did not matter whether the drones were sent by the South Korean military or by civilians, stressing that any drone crossing the border breaks North Korea's sovereignty. Kim warned that further provocations would be met with strong responses.

According to Kim, data recovered from the drones showed images linked to a uranium mine, North Korean border posts and the closed Kaesong joint industrial complex.

Australia extends emergency aid for bushfire victims

MELBOURNE

Australia has announced fresh emergency funding to help communities hit hard by ongoing bushfires in the southeastern state of Victoria. Authorities confirmed that more than 300 buildings have been destroyed as fires continue to burn across large areas of the state.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Victoria Premier Jacinta Allan announced a 19.5 million Australian dollar relief package to provide urgent support for affected residents. The funding aims to meet immediate needs while recovery planning begins.

Of the total amount, 10 million dollars will be used to supply fodder to farmers who have suffered heavy livestock losses. Another 1.5 million dollars has been set aside to provide emergency accommodation for thousands of people forced to leave their homes due to evacuation orders. One million dollars will support mental health services for families coping with trauma and loss. Speaking in the city of Bendigo alongside emergency officials, Albanese said the federal government would stand by Victorians during both the crisis and the rebuilding phase. He said close cooperation with the state government would ensure help reaches those who need it most. As of Sunday morning, 32 bushfires were active across Victoria, with 15 warnings urging residents to evacuate immediately. Premier Allan stressed that following evacuation orders is the safest way to protect lives.

Emergency Management Commissioner Tim Wiebusch confirmed that about 150 structures were destroyed by a major fire near Longwood, north of Melbourne. That fire alone has burned about 144,000 hectares since Wednesday.

Although cooler temperatures are expected, authorities warned that strong winds will keep firefighting conditions dangerous and challenging for residents and crews across the affected regions.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	5	7			3	2		
			7	4			9	
4		6		5		3		1
8		2	6				5	
	7		2		5		3	
5		1		8	9	6		7
	4	9		2		7		5
2		8			4		1	
7			3		6	4		2

3	5	1	4	9	8	7	2	9
2	4	9	7	6	5	1	3	8
6	7	8	1	3	2	9	5	4
8	9	4	5	2	3	6	1	7
1	3	2	6	8	7	5	4	9
5	6	7	9	1	4	2	8	3
7	1	3	2	4	6	8	9	5
4	2	6	8	5	9	3	7	1
9	8	5	3	7	1	4	6	2

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Mass protests erupt after fatal ICE shooting

MINNEAPOLIS

Tens of thousands of people marched through Minneapolis to protest the fatal shooting of a woman by a U.S. immigration officer, turning the city into a major center of nationwide demonstrations against immigration enforcement.

Police estimated that the crowd reached tens of thousands despite freezing winds. The protests followed the death of 37-year-old Renee Good, who was shot by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent earlier this week while sitting in her car. The incident has sparked anger across the country and led to more than 1,000 planned "ICE Out" rallies nationwide.

Led by Indigenous Mexican dancers, protesters marched toward the residential street where Good was killed. Many chanted her name and shouted slogans demanding the removal of ICE from local communities. Demonstrators described feeling angry, heartbroken, and desperate for change. Minnesota officials have said the shooting was unjustified, pointing to video footage that appears to show Good's car moving away from the agent when shots were fired. Federal authorities, however, claimed the officer acted in self defense, saying the vehicle moved toward agents during the encounter.

RESTORING WILDLIFE BARRIERS

Sri Lanka orders fast elephant fence repairs

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has ordered officials to restore elephant fences damaged by Cyclone Ditwah within one week, aiming to reduce rising risks to people and wildlife. The Environment Ministry said the directive was given by Minister Dammika Patabendi during a review meeting on recovery work held over the weekend.

Officials reported that large sections of electric fencing were badly damaged across several districts already struggling with Human Elephant Conflict. These fences play a key role in keeping elephants away from villages and farms, especially after disasters that disturb forest areas and food sources.

Human Elephant Conflict remains a serious issue in parts of the country. Government data shows that 438 elephants and 158 people lost their lives in 2025, underlining the urgent need for stronger protection measures and faster repairs.

The fence restoration order comes as the government begins wider recovery efforts after the cyclone. On Friday, authorities launched a major housing rebuilding and compensation program for affected families under the "Rebuilding Sri Lanka" initiative.

New housing projects were inaugurated in Anuradhapura and Kurunegala districts, including Galnewa, Rajanganaya, Nikaweratiya and Rideegama. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said early estimates suggest 20,000 to 25,000 homes nationwide will need rebuilding.

About 6,000 houses were fully destroyed, while another 17,000 to 18,000 were partly damaged or declared unsafe. Final assessments are expected soon.

The president said reconstruction will continue alongside national housing plans in the 2026 budget, which aim to build 31,000 homes for low income families, displaced groups and estate workers. India will also assist with hill country housing projects.

Cyclone Ditwah caused an estimated economic loss of 4.1 billion dollars.

MEDVEDEV warms up in style for Australian Open with Brisbane win

Former world number one claims confidence-boosting title ahead of Melbourne Grand Slam

BRISBANE

Three-time Australian Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev delivered a timely reminder of his pedigree by lifting the Brisbane International title on Sunday, sealing an ideal build-up to the season's first Grand Slam.

The Russian, currently ranked world number 13, proved too strong for American Brandon Nakashima, winning 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) in 96 minutes on Pat Rafter Arena to claim his 22nd ATP Tour title. The victory underlined Medvedev's readiness for the Australian Open, which begins in Melbourne on January 18.

Medvedev was in complete control early, breaking a shell-shocked Nakashima twice in the opening set. Using his flat groundstrokes and depth to full effect, the Russian dictated play and appeared on course for a swift straight-sets win.

> Daniil Medvedev sent a strong message ahead of the Australian Open by winning the Brisbane International title on Sunday. The world number 13 defeated American Brandon Nakashima 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) in a 96-minute final to claim his 22nd ATP Tour crown. Medvedev dominated the opening set before facing resistance in the second, where Nakashima saved match points and forced a tiebreak. The Russian's composure proved decisive as he raced to a 5-0 lead in the breaker. The victory boosts Medvedev's confidence as he heads to Melbourne, where he has reached three finals.

However, Nakashima showed resilience in the second set, raising his intensity and forcing Medvedev to work harder on serve. The American saved match points and pushed the set into a tiebreak, briefly threatening to extend the contest.

Once in the breaker, though, Medvedev's experience and composure shone through. He surged to a commanding 5-0 lead, draining the belief from his opponent before closing out the match with authority.

"I started pretty strong, but then Brandon found his way back," Medvedev said after the match. "He saved some match points and almost got it to a third set, so I'm happy with how I handled that."

The Brisbane title carries added significance for Medvedev, who finished runner-up at the tournament in 2019.

"It's been a great start to the year," he said. "I remember saying back then that I would try to come back and win it. I came back seven or eight years later, and I'm really happy to hold the trophy."

Medvedev, a three-time finalist at the Australian Open, will now head to Melbourne with confidence, momentum and match sharpness — ingredients he hopes will finally help him go one step further at his favoured Grand Slam.

Mandhana's RCB look to consolidate as UP Warriorz fret over Deepti Sharma's form

NAVI

Having come through a trial by fire in their opening encounter, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will aim to consolidate their position when they face a star-studded UP Warriorz in a Women's Premier League clash here on Monday. The Smriti Mandhana-led RCB, defending champions from the 2024 season, pulled off a thrilling three-wicket victory over Mumbai Indians on Friday, a result that left MI skipper Harmanpreet Kaur stunned. South African all-rounder Nadine de Klerk emerged as the hero, producing a sensational performance with an unbeaten 63 and four wickets, before sealing the match with the winning runs off the final delivery.

Champions seek momentum as Warriorz search answers after uneven starts to campaign.

While Mumbai Indians quickly bounced back with a commanding win over Delhi Capitals, the sting of that last-ball defeat is likely to linger. For Mandhana and RCB, however, the victory was one to savour, and they will hope de Klerk can replicate her match-winning impact against UP Warriorz.

Mandhana would also be keen to see her top-order batters find form. Apart from de Klerk, RCB's batting struggled, and players such as Grace Harris, Mandhana herself, Dayalan Hemalatha, Richa Ghosh and Radha Yadav will need to shoulder greater responsibility. In the bowling department, more discipline will be expected from Arundhati Reddy, Shreyanka Patil and Radha, who proved expensive against MI.

UP Warriorz, meanwhile, enter the contest with concerns of their own. All-rounder Deepti Sharma, the costliest Indian buy at Rs 3.2 crore in the auction, endured a forgettable outing against Gujarat Giants. She finished wicketless and managed just one run in a narrow 10-run defeat while chasing 207.

New skipper Meg Lanning will hope Deepti rediscovers her rhythm quickly. The Warriorz will also look for stronger contributions from Kiran Navgire and Harleen Deol at the top, though Phoebe Litchfield's fluent 78 in a losing cause provided a rare positive.

With contrasting moods and key players under scrutiny, Monday's clash promises intrigue and intensity.

Arsenal hire throw-in specialist Thomas Gronnemark

LONDON

Arsenal have turned to throw-in expert Thomas Gronnemark in a bid to improve their long-throw game. The Danish coach, who served as Liverpool's throw-in specialist under Jurgen Klopp between 2018 and 2023, has also worked with Brentford on a consultancy basis, helping the west London club become the Premier League's most effective team at scoring from long throws.

Gronnemark's work with Brentford has seen the Bees net nine goals from long throws since the start of last season, while Arsenal have failed to score from any during the same period. His arrival at Arsenal, in a consultancy rather than full-time capacity, reflects the club's growing interest in set-piece and throw-in innovation.

Sixth-tier Macclesfield stuns FA Cup holder Crystal Palace in monumental shock

MACCLESFIELD, ENGLAND

The FA Cup produced another chapter of its enduring magic as sixth-tier Macclesfield delivered one of the greatest shocks in the competition's 155-year history, knocking out defending champions Crystal Palace 2-1 in the third round.

Separated by a staggering 117 places in the English football pyramid, 14th-placed National League North side Macclesfield stunned their Premier League opponents with a performance that blended discipline, belief and raw emotion. Managed by John Rooney, younger brother of England legend Wayne Rooney, the hosts rose to the occasion at the Leasing.com Stadium, a modest 5,900-capacity ground that witnessed scenes of pure disbelief at the final whistle.

The victory came against a poignant backdrop. Macclesfield are still grieving the loss of 21-year-old forward Ethan McLeod, who was killed in a car crash last month while returning from a match at Bedford Town. A banner bearing his name hung behind the dugouts, and his family watched from the stands as the team he once represented produced a result for the ages.

Captain Paul Dawson gave Macclesfield the lead just before halftime, before Isaac Buckley-Ricketts doubled the advantage in the 60th minute following a goalmouth scramble. Palace pulled one back through a last-gasp Yeremy Pino free kick, setting up a tense finale, but the hosts held firm through six agonising minutes of stoppage time.

As fans poured onto the pitch chanting "Silkmen! Silkmen!", Rooney struggled to put the moment into words. "You always have that little hope in the FA Cup," he said. "But I didn't think it was possible. We were incredible from the first minute."

For Palace, winners of the FA Cup for the first time last season, it was a humbling afternoon. Manager Oliver Glasner admitted he was at a loss to explain the performance, while captain Marc Guéhi stayed behind to face travelling supporters.

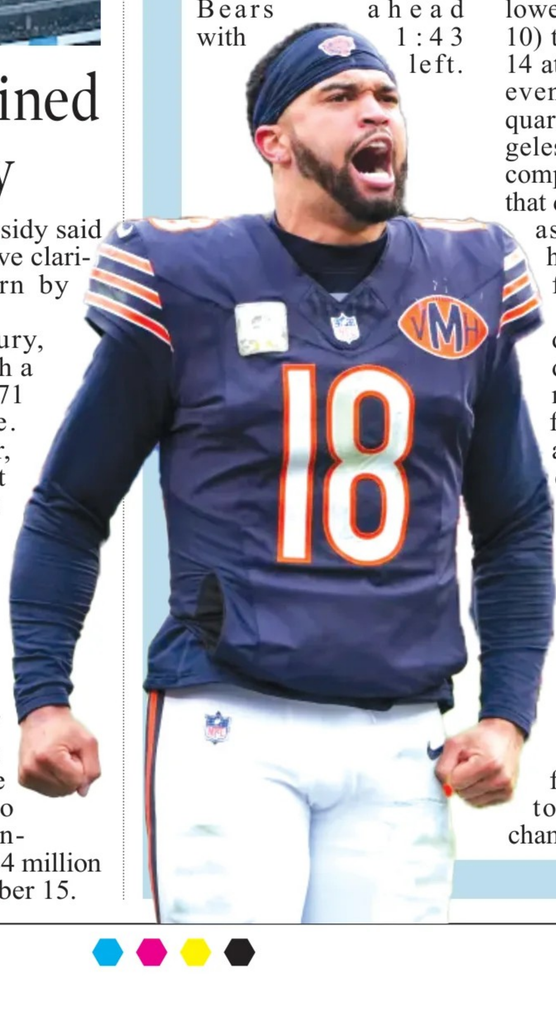
In a competition built on romance, Macclesfield ensured this was a day football will long remember.

Bears and Rams stage dramatic comebacks to reach NFL divisional round

CHICAGO, LOS ANGELES

The NFL playoffs opened with two thrilling wild-card games, as the Chicago Bears and Los Angeles Rams staged stunning late comebacks to advance to the divisional round.

The Bears (12-6) overcame a 21-3 halftime deficit to defeat the Green Bay Packers 31-27, marking Chicago's first playoff victory since 2010. Trailing 27-16 with under seven minutes remaining, quarterback Caleb Williams orchestrated a remarkable turnaround, throwing two touchdown passes in the final minutes. His 25-yard strike to D.J. Moore put the Bears ahead with 1:43 left.



Green Bay's quarterback Jordan Love attempted a last-second Hail Mary into the end zone, but it was knocked down, sealing the win. Williams finished with 361 passing yards, two touchdowns, and two interceptions, propelling the No. 2 seed Bears into a showdown against the Rams or Philadelphia Eagles next weekend.

Meanwhile, the Rams (13-5) needed a last-minute heroics to topple the Carolina Panthers 34-31. All-Pros Matthew Stafford and Puka Nacua combined to deliver a decisive 19-yard touchdown pass to Colby Parkinson in the closing moments. Despite opening with a 14-0 lead, the Rams allowed the Panthers (8-10) to claw back to 17-14 at halftime. Carolina even led in the third quarter before Los Angeles regained control, completing a comeback that defied expectations, as the Rams were heavy double-digit favorites.

Both victories underscored the unpredictability and drama of NFL playoff football, with veteran leadership and clutch performances shaping outcomes. The Bears' improbable rally and the Rams' last-minute heroics set up an exciting NFC divisional round, where both teams will aim to carry their momentum forward on the road to the conference championship.

Nikhat, Lovlina clinch gold as Jadumani shines at Senior National Boxing Championships

CHENNAI

India's leading women boxers Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain lived up to expectations, while emerging talent Jadumani Singh announced his arrival on the big stage by winning gold on the final day of the Senior National Boxing Championships at Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida. The much-anticipated men's 50–55kg final saw Jadumani Singh produce a dominant display to outclass experienced campaigner Pawan Bartwal 5-0, clinching his maiden senior national title. Calm under pressure and sharp with his combinations, the young boxer controlled the bout from start to finish, underlining his promise as one of the country's brightest prospects.In the women's section, two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen stamped her authority in the 48–51kg final, registering a comprehensive 5-0 victory over Haryana's Nitu. Nikhat's speed, movement and tactical maturity proved decisive as she added another national gold to her growing list of accolades.

Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain also returned to the top of the podium, defeating Sanamacha Chanu Thokchom of Railways to win the women's 70–75kg title. Lovlina's composed performance reflected her experience, as she dictated the pace to secure gold comfortably.

The Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) emerged as the overall champions, topping the medals tally with an impressive 12 gold medals across men's and women's categories. SSCB boxers claimed nine golds in the men's competition and three in the women's section, underlining their depth and dominance.

Among other notable results, SSCB's Aditya Pratap edged out Abhinash Jamwal of Himachal Pradesh 3-2 in the men's 60–65kg final.

Golden Knights goalie Carter Hart sidelined week to week with lower-body injury

LAS VEGAS

Vegas Golden Knights goalie Carter Hart has been ruled out week to week with a lower-body injury, head coach Bruce Cassidy confirmed ahead of the team's home game against the St. Louis Blues. Hart sustained the injury during the first period of Thursday's 5-3 victory over Columbus.

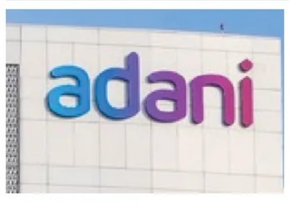
In his absence, Akira Schmid will start against the Blues. Schmid has posted a 2.51 goals-against average and a .895 save percentage this season. To provide further depth, Vegas called up Carl Lindbom from their AHL affiliate in Henderson, Nevada. Lindbom has seven appearances for the Golden Knights this season, going 1-4-2 with a 3.14 GAA and .870 save percentage.

"Akira has done a really good job for us," Cassidy said. "We liked what he did last year, and we hoped that would translate this season. With Carl, there was some unknown in his first call-up. He got a taste of NHL shooters, experienced the difference between the NHL and the AHL, and he's played well back in Henderson." Lindbom has a 6-3-3 record in Henderson with a 2.08 GAA and a .926 save percentage.

The Golden Knights are now without their top two goalies, though Adin Hill has been practicing. Hill, who led Vegas to a Stanley Cup three years ago, played only five games this season before also suffering a lower-body injury. Cassidy said the team should have clarity on Hill's return by Tuesday.

Before his injury, Hart was 5-3-3 with a 3.28 GAA and a .871 save percentage. Signed in October, Hart made his first NHL appearance in nearly two years on December 2 in a 4-3 win over Chicago. Hart was also among five 2018 Canadian world junior players acquitted of sexual assault in July and was the first of the group to sign an NHL contract—a two-year, $4 million deal effective October 15.

QUICK READ



Adani Group to invest Rs 1.5 lakh crore in Gujarat's Kachchh

Ahmedabad

The Adani Group will invest Rs 1.5 lakh crore in Gujarat's Kachchh region over the next five years, underlining its long-term commitment to the state, Adani Ports and SEZ Limited Managing Director Karan Adani said on Sunday. The investments reflect India's message to the world that economic growth, climate responsibility and energy security can move forward together, Karan Adani said. In his remarks at an event in Rajkot, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said Gujarat is not just a state of investment for the Adani Group, but the very foundation of its journey.

NSE CEO calls Tirupati darshan a 'good omen' after SEBI IPO update

Mumbai

Ashishkumar Chauhan, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), on Sunday visited Tirupati with his family and offered prayers at the temple of Lord Venkateshwara, seeking blessings for the exchange, its members, shareholders and the country. Speaking about the visit, Chauhan said the darshan took place early in the morning and described it as a deeply fulfilling experience. He noted that prayers were offered for the well-being of NSE and for the broader growth of the nation.

Uniper Nears Green Ammonia Deal with India

Germany's Uniper is close to sealing a green ammonia deal with India, boosting clean energy cooperation

NEW DELHI

Germany's state-owned energy major Uniper SE is close to signing an agreement to procure green ammonia from India, a move expected to significantly strengthen clean energy ties between the two countries. Reports indicate that the deal could be finalised around the time of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit to India next week.

Green ammonia, produced using renewable electricity, is a critical feedstock for manufacturing green hydrogen—an energy source that Germany is increasingly relying on to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and meet ambitious climate targets. While the exact volume of green ammonia involved in the proposed agreement has not been disclosed, the deal is seen as part of Uniper's broader strategy

to diversify its energy supply base and secure long-term access to clean fuels.

Uniper, which was spun off from E.ON in 2016 and became state-owned in 2022 amid Europe's energy crisis, plays a pivotal role in ensuring energy security across the continent. The company operates in several countries, including Germany, the UK, Sweden, and the Netherlands, and has been ramping up investments in hydrogen and other sustainable energy solutions as it targets carbon neutrality by 2040.

India, meanwhile, is fast emerging as a global hub for green ammonia and green hydrogen production. Backed by the National Green Hydrogen Mission, several large-scale projects are under development across the country. Odisha has become a key centre, with companies such as ACME and Avaada setting up major green ammonia plants. In addition, AM Green is developing a large export-focused project at Kakinada.

These projects are designed to cater to India's domestic fertiliser demand while also supplying overseas markets, including Europe and Japan, at competitive prices. For Germany, sourcing green ammonia from India offers a pathway to scale up clean hydrogen use while diversifying imports beyond traditional suppliers. Chancellor Merz will be on a two-day visit to India starting on the 12th of this month.

Russia–India Business Dialogue Highlights Economic Cooperation

MOSCOW

The XVI Russia–India Business Dialogue, held in Moscow, witnessed participation from more than 1,250 delegates and reaffirmed the steady expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries. Participants observed that the development of Russia–India ties and the implementation of joint business initiatives will continue on major international platforms, including the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), scheduled to take place from June 3 to 6.

The high-level Dialogue was jointly organised by the Indian Business Alliance, the Business Council for Cooperation with India, the Moscow Government, and the Roscongress Foundation. During the plenary session, speakers and delegates deliberated on the key directions of bilateral cooperation, focusing on resolving trade-related issues and identifying new opportunities to balance Russia–India trade,

Russia–India Business Dialogue in Moscow underscored growing bilateral cooperation and future joint projects on global platforms

according to an article published in Modern Diplomacy.

Key themes discussed included ensuring logistics and financial resilience amid global uncertainties, expanding industrial cooperation, promoting import substitution, and strengthening partnerships in energy, technology, and innovation. The Dialogue also explored the implementation of joint projects across critical sectors such as industry, energy, pharmaceuticals, and the digital economy, reflecting the broadening scope of engagement between the two nations.

Moscow government Minister and Head of the city's Department for External Economic and International Relations, Sergey Cheremin, highlighted the steady growth in business activity and the practical orientation of bilateral cooperation. He noted that Russia–India contacts have gained strong momentum, with more than 50 joint business events held over the past year. According to him, the current focus lies on the localisation of Indian businesses in Russia, deeper industrial cooperation, pharmaceuticals, electronics, creative industries, and the expansion of mutual investments and high-tech product supplies.

Echoing these views, Indian Business Alliance President Sammy Kotwani emphasised the pragmatic nature of Indian companies' interest in Russia. He said the Dialogue reflects a new stage of strategic partnership—practical, regionally focused, and aimed at delivering concrete outcomes. Kotwani pointed out that the large turnout and active participation of Russian regions demonstrate a high level of trust and long-term commitment between businesses from both sides.

CII has urged calibrated privatisation in Union Budget 2026–27 to unlock PSU value and boost growth

CII Urges Calibrated Privatisation

NEW DELHI

The apex business chamber Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has called on the Central government to adopt a calibrated and forward-looking approach to privatisation as part of its proposals for the Union Budget 2026–27. The chamber said such a strategy would help mobilise resources, unlock the latent value of public sector enterprises (PSEs), and allow the government to focus more effectively on its core functions.

Highlighting the growing role of private enterprise in India's economic expansion, CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said that India's growth story is increasingly being driven by entrepreneurship, innovation, and private investment. A forward-looking privatisation policy, aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, will enable the government to focus on its core functions while empowering the private sector to accelerate industrial transformation and job creation, he said.

Against this backdrop, CII has urged the government to accelerate the implementation of its Strategic Disinvestment Policy. This policy envisages a complete exit from PSEs operating in non-strategic sectors, while retaining only a minimal presence in those deemed strategic. According to CII, faster and more decisive action on disinvestment is essential to improve efficiency, attract capital, and reduce the fiscal burden on the exchequer.

To strengthen and expedite the privatisation programme, CII has outlined a comprehensive four-pronged strategy. The first and key recommendation is a shift towards a demand-based approach for selecting PSEs for privatisation.

Currently, the government identifies specific enterprises for sale and then invites investor interest. However, when adequate demand or desired valuation is not achieved, the process often slows down or stalls.

CII has suggested reversing this sequence by first gauging investor interest across a wider pool of public sector enterprises. Based on the level of demand and valuation expectations, the government could then prioritise those enterprises that are more likely to attract credible investors. According to the industry body, such an approach would ensure smoother execution, reduce delays, and lead to better price discovery.

Signature Global's Q3 sales bookings fall 27 pc

NEW DELHI

Realty firm Signature Global on Sunday reported a sharp decline in its sales bookings for the December quarter, even as the housing market usually sees strong demand during the festive season. The Gurugram-based company said its sales bookings fell 27 per cent to Rs 2,020 crore in the October–December quarter, compared to Rs 2,770 crore in the same period last financial year, according to its stock exchange filing.

The company sold 408 housing units during the quarter, a steep drop from 1,518 units sold a year ago. In terms of area, sales bookings declined to 1.44 million square feet from 2.49 million square feet in the year-ago period.

The October–December quarter is typically considered strong for real estate sales due to festivals, but Signature Global did not cite any specific reason for the slowdown in its regulatory filing.

One possible factor behind the lower numbers could be the timing of project launches. The company rolled out a major housing project on Dwarka Expressway only towards the end of December, which may have limited sales during the quarter.

For the first nine months of the current financial year, Signature Global's sales bookings dropped 23 per cent to Rs 6,680 crore, compared to Rs 8,670 crore in the same period last financial year.

During this period, the company sold 1,746 units, down from 3,539 units a year earlier, Signature Global said.

Commenting on the performance, Chairman Pradeep Kumar Aggarwal said the company delivered a healthy performance in the first nine months of FY26, supported by steady demand in its key micro-markets. He added that the launch of its wellness-focused premium project, Sarvam at DXP Estate on Dwarka Expressway, received encouraging response, reflecting changing buyer preferences.

Signature Global had recorded sales bookings of Rs 10,290 crore in the last financial year, making it the fifth-largest listed real estate developer by sales.

India's rice exports jump 19.4 pc after curbs lifted

NEW DELHI

India's rice exports rose sharply by 19.4 per cent last year to reach the second-highest level on record, after the government lifted all export curbs.

The removal of restrictions made Indian rice more competitive in global markets and helped the country strengthen its position as the world's largest exporter of the staple grain, as per reports. The strong return of Indian rice to international markets led to a steady flow of supplies, which in turn reduced exports from rival producers such as Thailand and Vietnam. This surge in availability pushed rice prices in Asia to their lowest levels in nearly a de-

FIIs to turn buyers in India over positive developments on US-India trade deal

NEW DELHI

Analysts on Sunday said that foreign institutional investors (FIIs) will turn buyers in India with positive developments on the US-India trade agreement and uptick in earnings growth, which will improve investor sentiment. FII investment in early 2026 has begun with the continuation of the trend of the previous year.

In 2025, FIIs had net sold equity for Rs 166,283 crore, impacting the performance of the Indian market and also weakening the rupee by about 5 per cent. At the beginning of 2026, the expectation was that FIIs will turn buyers on improvement in GDP growth and corporate earnings, said Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd.

Also, the market expectation was that the much delayed US-India treaty will materialise early in the year.

But geopolitical developments took a turn for the worse with the US intervention in Venezuela and absence of positive developments on the trade talks. Some negative comments from the US commerce secretary gave the impression that the trade agreement will be further delayed, he noted.

This impacted the market sentiments and FIIs continued selling by increasing the volume of selling in the last two trading days.

The total FII selling (cash market) through January 9 stood at Rs 11,784 crore.

The market sentiments have turned weak that despite DII buying of Rs 17,900 crore in January through 9, Nifty drifted down by 618 points in the week ending January 9.

The sell-off last week was broad-based, with cyclical and policy-sensitive sectors bearing the brunt of the correction.

Energy, metals, and realty stocks emerged as the top laggards, weighed down by concerns over global trade disruptions, commodity demand uncertainty, and risk-off positioning. Banking stocks also declined, with Bank Nifty underperforming the broader market amid cautious sentiment and persistent FII selling, said Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Musk to open new X algorithm for public in seven days

WASHINGTON

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk has said that he will open the new X algorithm to the public in seven days. It will include all code for organic and advertising post recommendations. We will publish the full algorithm in a week. Still much to improve. It's just trying to show you what you are most likely to find interesting. The goal is to maximise unregretted user-seconds, Musk said.

This will be repeated every 4 weeks, with comprehensive developer notes, to help you understand what changed, he posted on X. The world's richest man didn't say why X was making its algorithm open source. He and the company have clashed several times with regulators over content being shown to users.

The decision comes as the European Commission has decided to extend a retention order sent to X last year, which related to algorithms and dissemination of illegal content. Some X users had previously complained that they were receiving fewer posts on the social media platform from people they follow.

In October, Musk confirmed in a post on X that the company had found a significant bug in the platform's For You algorithm and pledged a fix. The company has also been working to incorporate more artificial intelligence into its recommendation algorithm for X, using Grok.

Meanwhile, Musk's artificial intelligence startup, xAI, has announced the completion of a $20 billion funding round from investors including Nvidia, Valor Equity Partners and the Qatar Investment Authority. The company did not disclose individual investment amounts or the split between debt and equity, and named Stepstone Group, Fidelity Management & Research, MGX, Baron Capital Group and Cisco Systems Inc.'s investment group among other investors who participated in the funding.

NVIDIA KOREA AI

South Korea Pushes Nvidia to Set Up R&D Centre

SEOUL

South Korea's science ministry said on Sunday that it has shared its views with Nvidia on the swift establishment of a research and development centre in the country, signalling a major push to strengthen national capabilities in artificial intelligence. The move reflects Seoul's broader strategy to position itself as a global hub for advanced AI research, development, and innovation.

According to the Ministry of Science and ICT, Second Vice Science Minister Ryu Jemyung met Jay Puri, Executive Vice President at Nvidia, in California. During the meeting, both sides agreed on the importance of promptly setting up Nvidia's research and development facility in South Korea. They also discussed measures to jointly nurture artificial intelligence startups, including cooperation in talent development, research collaboration, and technology commercialisation.

The ministry said the proposed R&D centre would play a critical role in strengthening South Korea's AI ecosystem by enabling closer collaboration between Nvidia and domestic companies, universities, and research institutes. It would also support the country's long-term objective of achieving technological self-reliance in key future industries.

Meanwhile, South Korean internet and technology giant Naver announced that it has built the country's largest artificial intelligence computing cluster powered by Nvidia's next-generation B200 Blackwell graphics processing units (GPUs). The newly launched B200 4K Cluster provides computing capabilities on a global scale and is expected to significantly enhance Naver's AI research and service development.

In a press release, Naver said the cluster will support the development of its proprietary foundation models and facilitate broader applications of AI technologies across industries. The infrastructure is designed for large-scale parallel processing and high-speed communications, offering performance comparable to that of the world's top 500 supercomputers.

Naver Chief Executive Officer Choi Soo-yeon described the development as a milestone for the country's AI ambitions. This AI infrastructure is a meaningful step in strengthening national AI competitiveness and self-reliance, she said.

SABALENKA wins Brisbane final amid frosty exchange with Kostyuk

World number one Aryna Sabalenka clinches Brisbane title amid tense final exchange

BRISBANE

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka captured her second consecutive Brisbane International title on Sunday, defeating Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 6-4, 6-3 in a high-intensity final marked by a frosty post-match atmosphere. Appearing in the Brisbane final for the third straight year, the Belarusian looked comfortable on familiar ground at Pat Rafter Arena, closing out the contest in just 1 hour and 17 minutes. The victory was Sabalenka's 22nd career title and a confident tune-up ahead of the Australian Open, which begins on January 18. Kostyuk began aggressively, targeting Sabalenka's second serve and using deft drop shots to recover an early break. For a brief period, the Ukrainian unsettled the world No. 1 with her variety and court craft. But Sabalenka's trademark power and relentless intensity soon took control, as she dictated from the baseline and clinched the opening set in 40 minutes under oppressive Brisbane humidity. As the match wore on, the physical toll became evident. Sabalenka raised her level in the second set, mixing heavy groundstrokes with occasional touch to draw errors from Kostyuk. She did not drop a set all week en route to the title. The on-court tension resurfaced after match point. Sabalenka kissed both biceps while looking toward Kostyuk, a gesture widely interpreted as a reference to past comments made by the Ukrainian.

Kohli retired from Tests early but hunger to continue till 2027 WC: Donald

CAPE TOWN

South African great Allan Donald lauds Virat Kohli's hunger, fitness and longevity mindset.

South African pace legend Allan Donald believes Virat Kohli retired from Test cricket a little earlier than expected but feels the Indian batting stalwart has enough hunger and drive to continue at the highest level until the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Donald, who shared a close working relationship with Kohli during his stint as bowling coach of Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL between 2014 and 2015, cited the former India captain's unmatched work ethic as the biggest reason behind his confidence.

"You know, I don't think I've ever seen hunger in a player other than Virat. I've got massive respect for him," Donald told a select media gathering on the sidelines of the SA20 league. "I often talk about him in dressing rooms while discussing what it means to be a champion trainer. There's no one that trains as hard as him. He's just a machine."

The 59-year-old former fast bowler admitted that Kohli's absence from the longest format is still felt. "I actually miss him in the Test match arena. I think he's retired too early," Donald said. "But there's no doubt in my mind that we'll see him in the white-ball arena, especially in the World Cup, very, very soon."

Donald also shared his views on South Africa's prospects in the upcoming T20 World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. He described the Proteas squad as balanced and capable of challenging the best, while noting the difficulty bowlers face on Indian wickets. "I think India has the best T20 wickets on the planet. The skill level of batting has gone to another level," he said, adding that smart bowling would be key to success.Praising the growth of the SA20 league, Donald expressed optimism about its future, calling it South Africa's closest equivalent to the IPL and a vital platform for emerging talent.

Alexander Bublik secures Top 10 debut after capturing Hong Kong title

HONG KONG

Alexander Bublik enjoyed a landmark moment in his career on Sunday as he clinched the Hong Kong Open title and, in the process, confirmed his debut in the ATP Top 10 rankings.The 28-year-old defeated seventh-ranked Lorenzo Musetti 7-6 (2), 6-3 in the final to claim his first ATP title of the season. When the updated rankings are released on Monday, Bublik will rise from No. 11 to No. 10, becoming the first player representing Kazakhstan to break into the men's Top 10. "Well, I have no words," Bublik said after the match. "The only goal for this season was to achieve the Top 10, and in the first week I'm winning the title and I'm already there. If you told me that last April, I would never believe you." The breakthrough has been years in the making. Bublik first entered the Top 100 in 2017, reached the Top 50 in 2019, broke into the Top 20 in 2024 and now joins the sport's elite. His rise has been fuelled by a remarkable run of form, winning 34 of his last 43 matches since May and lifting five titles in the past seven months — Halle, Gstaad, Kitzbuhel and Hangzhou in 2025, followed by Hong Kong this year.

'Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma make life easier': SHUBMAN GILL

HYDERABAD

India's ODI captain Shubman Gill lavished praise on senior batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, saying their presence in the team makes a captain's job significantly easier, especially in high-pressure situations. Gill described Rohit as one of the greatest openers in the history of one-day cricket and Kohli as among the finest ODI batters the game has ever seen. The young captain underlined the value of their experience and leadership, even though neither currently holds a formal captaincy role.

"Among the two players you have named, one is the greatest opener of all time in ODIs, and Virat bhai is one of the greatest ODI batters ever," Gill said. "Having these two people in your team makes your life a lot easier. Whenever you are in a challenging situation, you can go to them for input."

Gill explained that both Kohli and Rohit have repeatedly dealt with pressure situations across formats and conditions, making their decision-making insights invaluable. "They've often been in those situations, so you can understand how they think or what they would do. That piece of information is very valuable for any captain," he added.

Gill said India's focus would be on fielding their strongest possible XI and finding the best combinations, regardless of the opposition's strength. "We don't look at whether the opposition is at full strength or not. We want to play at full strength and find the best combinations," he said. Gill also spoke about conditions in India, noting that bowling second can be particularly challenging due to dew. He stressed that successfully defending targets in such situations would be a major confidence booster for the team.

"If we can defend totals despite the dew and find combinations where bowlers can step up in those conditions, it will give us a lot of confidence going forward," Gill said.

AIFF asks ISL clubs to send details of venues for home matches

NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has asked Indian Super League (ISL) clubs to submit details of the venues where they intend to host their home matches by Monday noon, as preparations gather pace for the delayed 2025–26 season, scheduled to kick off on February 14.

In a letter addressed to the clubs, the AIFF thanked them for "agreeing to participate in principle in the Indian Super League" and said the venue details were crucial for finalising the match schedule and commercial arrangements. The communication was issued by AIFF Deputy General Secretary M Satyanarayan.

"We would like to reiterate the AIFF's proposal to organise the 2025–26 season of the ISL with co-operation from the participating clubs," the letter stated.

"In order to assist AIFF finalise broadcast partners, commercial rights partners and the fixtures for the upcoming season, we request you to confirm the details of the venue that you will play your home matches at, not later than 12 noon on January 12, 2026." The ISL was earlier put on hold due to the absence of a commercial partner. On Tuesday, Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced that the league would resume on February 14, with all 14 clubs expected to participate. If all teams take part, the top-tier league will feature 91 matches on a home-and-away basis.

The AIFF said that once venue confirmations and the required deposits are received, it will share a draft governance framework for the ISL, issue draft requests for proposals (RFPs) to appoint broadcast and commercial rights partners, and begin work on fixtures and related matters.

The federation also plans to seek exemptions from the Asian Football Confederation regarding ACL 2 slots.

Financially, the AIFF proposed a total budget of Rs 24.26 crore for the season, with an initial contribution of Rs 9.77 crore from the federation and Rs 1 crore from each participating club. The AIFF has earlier said clubs may pay the participation fee in instalments up to June 2026, if required.

Junior Hockey Coach Arrested for Raping Minor in Haryana's Rewari

REWARI

A junior hockey coach faces arrest after allegedly raping a minor girl in Rewari district, Haryana, leading to her pregnancy and subsequent miscarriage, police confirmed.

The incident surfaced when a 17-year-old Class 12 student from a local village lodged a complaint at Khol police station on January 9. The victim, an aspiring hockey player, had known the coach for three years through her training at a stadium. She accused him of assaulting her in the facility's bathroom about four months ago. The assault resulted in her pregnancy. On January 5, her health worsened due to a miscarriage, prompting her family to rush her to a hospital. This tragic turn prompted her to come forward.

Rewari police swiftly registered a First Information Report (FIR) under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code. "We arrested the accused coach immediately," a police spokesperson stated. "After court appearance, we secured two days' remand to interrogate him thoroughly."

This case echoes a recent scandal in Faridabad, where another 17-year-old shooter accused a senior shooting coach of sexual assault during National Championships, highlighting vulnerabilities in India's sports training ecosystem.

Women's HIL: Pipers crack the shootout puzzle against Tigers, emerge champions

RANCHI

Sofie Gierts' tactical acumen finally delivered when it mattered most as SG Pipers overcame Shrachi Bengal Tigers in a tense penalty shootout to clinch the Women's Hockey India League title at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium. Locked at 1-1 after regulation time, the final drifted into a dramatic shootout — the third sudden-death meeting between the two sides this season. Having lost the previous two such encounters against the Tigers, Pipers found redemption when Lola Riera calmly converted the decisive penalty stroke, sealing a 3-2 shootout win and completing a remarkable turnaround for a team that had finished last in the previous edition. The match itself was played at a frenetic pace from the opening whistle. Pipers nearly struck within the first two minutes when Ishika's sharp cross found Jyoti Singh, but the Indian junior captain failed to capitalise. Juana Castellaro tested Tigers goalkeeper Jennifer Rizzo soon after, but the American stood firm to keep the scores level.

Against the run of play, it was Bengal Tigers who drew first blood in the second quarter. Vandana Katariya's aggressive high press forced an error, and Lalremsiami punished Pipers with a thunderous strike that ripped into the roof of the net.

Pipers pushed hard for an equaliser, with skipper Navneet Kaur coming agonisingly close in the third quarter as her effort skimmed wide.

Coca-Cola brings iconic FIFA World Cup Trophy to India after 12 years

NEW DELHI

The original FIFA World Cup Trophy arrived in India on Sunday as part of the FIFA World Cup™ Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola, marking its return to the country after a gap of 12 years ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026. As the exclusive partner of the Trophy Tour, Coca-Cola reaffirmed its long-standing association with global football by bringing one of sport's most recognisable symbols closer to Indian fans.

The tour began with a FIFA Charter Landing and the official unveiling of the trophy at the Taj Mahal Hotel on Man Singh Road in New Delhi. The event was attended by Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, FIFA legend and former Brazilian World Cup winner Gilberto D'Silva, sports historian and author Boria Majumdar, and senior leadership from Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia, including President Sanket Ray.

Speaking at the event, Dr Mandaviya said sports had emerged as a national priority under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highlighting its role in building discipline, confidence and character among the youth. He added that the FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour aligns with India's ambition to become one of the world's top five sporting nations by 2047 and supports the broader vision of a Viksit Bharat.

Sanket Ray noted that Indian sport is entering a defining phase, driven by increased participation, improved infrastructure and stronger global engagement. He credited sustained government initiatives for enabling access and grassroots development, adding that Coca-Cola's partnership with FIFA helps bring landmark sporting moments to Indian consumers.

The FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola is built on a partnership spanning over five decades. During its global journey, the trophy will visit 30 FIFA member associations across 75 stops over 150 tour days.

Made of 18-carat solid gold and weighing 6.175 kg, the iconic trophy was designed in 1974. Reflecting a community-first approach, Coca-Cola India has integrated its #MaidaanSaaf initiative into the tour, promoting responsible waste management through recycling stations and trained volunteers at public events.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.